



*From Local Lessons to
National Practice: An Update
to the Final Evaluation of the
ADAPT and EMPLOYMENT
Community Initiatives in
Great Britain*

GHK Economics and Management



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ISBN 1 84185 460 3

March 2001

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1 INTRODUCTION

GHK Economics and Management were commissioned in May 1999 to undertake the final evaluation of the ADAPT and EMPLOYMENT Community Initiatives in Great Britain. The evaluation took place in two stages – the first between June and December 1999 and the second, smaller, stage in the second half of 2000.

The ADAPT and EMPLOYMENT programmes seek to foster innovative policy development and practical activities through a range of development projects, supported through the European Social Fund on a match funding basis. The themes of innovation, transnational collaboration and mainstreaming are central to each programme - with new ideas being trialled in the context of national and transnational partnership, and findings being disseminated and used to inform both practical and policy development. Projects funded under ADAPT focused on SMEs to assist the adaptation of the workforce to industrial change and promote competitiveness, and under EMPLOYMENT to support different target groups facing specific difficulties in the labour market. The EMPLOYMENT programme consisted of four strands:

- NOW – promoting equal opportunities between men and women
- YOUTHSTART – targeting young people under 20 years of age
- HORIZON – targeting disabled people
- INTEGRA – targeting vulnerable and disadvantaged groups.

Three rounds of ADAPT and two of EMPLOYMENT projects (with additional funding for EMPLOYMENT joint dissemination activity) were supported in GB since 1995, with 984 projects being supported and an ESF commitment of over 480 million Euro. With the final ADAPT projects completing in 2001, the evaluation aimed to provide information to support the development of the successor programme, EQUAL, due to be implemented in early 2001.

2 PREVIOUS FINDINGS

To set the context for the second stage of the study, the key conclusions and recommendations from the previous report are summarised below.

2.1 Conclusions

The initial project fieldwork identified that while the projects had **achieved a range of benefits** (including more than 43,000 beneficiaries receiving new qualifications between 1995 and 1998 alone), they were **less successful at mainstreaming their findings to influence national policy**.

Although many of the projects were still on-going at the time of interview, over half of the ADAPT and three quarters of the EMPLOYMENT projects were able to describe influences on practice at the local or regional level – primarily between project partners and agencies with related interests. While being more difficult to

identify and attribute, some influences on national policy were identified (in 9% and 28% of ADAPT and EMPLOYMENT projects respectively), including supporting the New Start initiative, national childcare strategy, and early years training framework.

A number of other findings were described, including:

- **Additionality** – high levels of additionality were identified, with over two thirds of ADAPT and over half of the EMPLOYMENT projects describing being unable to go ahead in the absence of ESF funding.
- **Innovation** – the projects interviewed most commonly featured process oriented innovations, such as the development of new training methods and materials, with ADAPT projects being more likely to develop wholly new approaches and EMPLOYMENT projects to examine combinations of existing ones. The projects also showed considerable potential for wider utilisation, with over 80% having potential relevance in their sector and beyond.
- **Transnationality** – the projects had limited expectations of the benefits of transnational collaboration, as reflected in their initial ambitions which focused on exchanging information rather than joint project development. Despite a series of barriers (such as cultural differences, a lack of complementarity and unequal contributions), projects commonly described the benefits of their collaborative activity exceeding initial expectations.

2.2 Recommendations

The principal recommendations related to ways of improving the mainstreaming process, but also referred to innovation, transnationality, delivery processes and project support. Recommendations across the three thematic areas included:

- **Mainstreaming** – a model for enhancing policy maker roles in the programme development, implementation and mainstreaming processes. By promoting the closer involvement of policy makers throughout the programme process, project activities could be more focussed from the outset, and formative and final dissemination processes being more targeted to enhance mainstream impacts.
- **Innovation** – enhancing guidance to projects on the types of innovation expected, ensuring projects' demonstration nature is retained, and seeking sufficiently flexible funding and management to stimulate and maintain innovation.
- **Transnationality** – continuing the previous pre-approval project development phase, seeking to develop shared programme timetables between different Member States, and providing targeted support to projects new to transnational collaboration.

3 FIELDWORK APPROACH AND KEY FINDINGS

The second stage of fieldwork was undertaken on a smaller scale to the first, and as with the first round took place while a number of the projects were still ongoing. The findings are described below.

3.1 ADAPT Round 3 Projects

Fieldwork Approach

The specific characteristics of ADAPT Round 3 (and its links to the University for Industry (Ufi)) made it an interesting model for practical and policy mainstreaming. The second round of fieldwork included interviews with eight Round 3 projects (all of whom were still operational), attendance at a series of dissemination events and follow-up contact, and a series of interviews with Ufi personnel.

Key Findings

In terms of **performance**, most of the projects interviewed were confident of achieving their performance targets. Barriers such as difficulties engaging with SMEs were commonly described, with limited understanding of, and capacity for, ICT-based learning opportunities emerging as common themes.

The minimum **transnational requirements** were relaxed for Round 3 projects, with a requirement to focus on transnational learning rather than joint development and delivery. This was reflected in projects' transnational ambitions, which were often limited to attending dissemination events. Three of the eight projects had, however, been involved in closer collaborations with transnational partners, and benefited from advanced information sharing and joint project development.

Most of the projects interviewed had been involved in a range of **dissemination** activities at the local, regional and national levels. These included national and project-specific events, project visits, networking (facilitated/thematic and between projects), and newsletters and reports – with similar activities set to continue to project completion.

Each project showed considerable potential for **mainstreaming**, and although still on-going were able to report impacts on practice and policy. Five of the eight were able to evidence impact on **practice** both locally and regionally, while two described having an impact on national and one on regional **policy**.

3.2 EMPLOYMENT Joint Dissemination Projects

Fieldwork Approach

In late 1999 a series of joint dissemination projects were funded, featuring partnerships of two or more EMPLOYMENT projects with the aim of undertaking additional dissemination activities. Some 58 projects received approval, and interviews took place with three to examine their experiences and identify their mainstream impacts. Clearly a sample of three from 58 makes any of the findings described indicative.

Key Findings

The projects interviewed were based on **partnerships** taken from the same funding strands, although membership varied from two local projects and a transnational partner to a larger group of four regional GB partners and four transnational partners in different member states. While the three projects had different initial aims and approaches, all three consisted of both research and dissemination stages, rather than being solely dissemination focused.

While the projects described achieving the majority of their aims, two described **barriers** including losing some of their initial partners and a lack of complementarity. The projects described a range of **achievements**, including demonstrating a model of beneficiary empowerment evaluation, increasing awareness of the topic of family learning, and expanding and sustaining networking and working relationships.

A range of **dissemination** approaches were described, all of which were additional to those of the individual projects. The **mainstream impacts** reported were primarily local and practice focused, with little evidence of influence at the national level. This was a source of disappointment for the projects, two of whom had attempted to engage with national policy makers without success.

3.3 Case Study Project Follow-Ups

Fieldwork Approach

Four case study projects from the first round of fieldwork were re-contacted to discuss progress over the subsequent year – one from ADAPT Round 2, one from Round 3, and HORIZON and YOUTHSTART projects from Round 2. All but the ADAPT Round 3 had completed at the time of interview, and the original project managers were contacted and interviewed.

Key Findings

Each of the projects described a range of **achievements**, with those completing having met their broad aims, objectives and output targets in the view of the project managers. Their main achievements ranged from the practical (such as developing new training approaches) to more strategic (such as changing attitudes to work and education in their target group).

The initial interviews identified a range of **delivery issues**, such as delays in finalising project approval, losing transnational partners early in project development and a lack of complementarity between partners. These issues continued to have an impact on the respective projects, with difficulties in attracting and engaging with SMEs being identified by the ADAPT projects.

All of the projects had been involved in **dissemination** activities, although one completed project described how plans for a final national conference were abandoned after difficulties attracting sufficient delegates. Dissemination events had taken place mainly at the local and regional levels, with some national and

transnational events also being described. The ADAPT Round 3 project was still ongoing, but described attending a number of events as part of the Ufi dissemination infrastructure.

In terms of **impact**, the projects all described examples of influence on **local practice**, with the ADAPT Round 3 project having some influence at the national level via the Ufi network. Influence at the **policy** level was limited, although again the ADAPT Round 3 project was confident of having some influence nationally prior to completion in 2001.

3.4 Information Recipients

Fieldwork Approach

Given the importance of mainstreaming to the success of both programmes, the initial fieldwork included a series of interviews with potential ‘information recipients’ from ADAPT and EMPLOYMENT projects. This approach was repeated in the later fieldwork, with a total of 13 individuals (including five Ufi representatives) being interviewed to identify what information they had received from projects, what use had been made of it (and views on its quality, relevance and timeliness), and any comments on the dissemination and mainstreaming processes overall.

Key Findings

As with the previous year’s findings, the **non-Ufi** representatives were able to identify **few new examples of projects influencing policy** at the national level. Although some of the new contacts raised issues around benchmarking and accessing project information, two expressed frustration in their attempts to engage with ADAPT projects.

The **Ufi representatives**, however, provided a more positive picture of the impacts of the ADAPT Round 3 projects, describing influences across a range of topic areas including Basic Skills, learner support and local service and hub development. Given that many of the Round 3 projects remain ongoing, it would appear that they are having a **significant influence on practice and policy through the Ufi infrastructure**.

4 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Conclusions

Overall, the conclusions of the latest fieldwork **support those described in the previous report**, as well confirming many of the key issues identified previously. In most cases the main impacts of the projects interviewed were **practice based and locally focused**, although the ADAPT Round 3 projects were found to have had significant impacts on Ufi policy and practice, and were expected to continue to do so until their completion in 2001.

4.2 Recommendations

Much as the latest fieldwork supported the original conclusions, it also **supported the main recommendations of the previous report**. In particular, the proposed programme management approach was supported, with the importance of policy maker involvement at all stages of programme development and management being stressed.

Given the levels of potential project application identified in both fieldwork stages, a final recommendation was that **steps continue to be taken** to ensure that the products, learning points and promising approaches identified are not lost and reach the widest possible audience.

1. INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

1.1 INTRODUCTION

GHK Economics and Management was commissioned by the Department for Education and Employment in May 1999 to undertake the final evaluation of the ADAPT and EMPLOYMENT Community Initiatives in Great Britain. The evaluation took place in two main stages - the first between June and December 1999 (and featuring the bulk of the fieldwork) and the second in the second half of 2000.

This report presents the findings of the second stage of the evaluation, and builds on the report produced in early 2000 based on the 1999 fieldwork. The earlier report presented a number of conclusions and recommendations, some of which were examined in the second fieldwork round, although this took place with a much smaller sample of projects. The fieldwork focused on the topics of dissemination and mainstreaming, principles central to the success of ADAPT and EMPLOYMENT at both the project and programme levels. The 2000 fieldwork included projects from ADAPT Round 3 and the EMPLOYMENT Joint Dissemination 'round', both of which featured approaches to dissemination and mainstreaming which are of potential relevance to the new Community Initiative EQUAL.

1.2 OVERVIEW OF THE ADAPT AND EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMMES

The ADAPT and EMPLOYMENT Community Initiatives seek to foster innovative policy development and practical activities through a range of development projects, which are supported through the European Social Fund (ESF) on a match funding basis. Each initiative has three central themes:

- Innovation - where new ideas or combinations of approaches are trialled
- Transnationality - where projects are delivered in the context of transnational as well as national partnership
- Mainstreaming - where project findings are disseminated and used to inform practical and policy development, also known as the multiplier effect.

Both programmes have a labour market focus, with ADAPT focusing on SMEs and seeking to assist the adaptation of the workforce to industrial change, promote competitiveness and prevent unemployment through human resource development; while EMPLOYMENT supports individuals from different target groups who face specific difficulties in the labour market. EMPLOYMENT consisted of four strands - NOW (which promoted equal opportunities between men and women), YOUTHSTART (which targeted young people under 20 years of age), HORIZON (which targeted disabled people) and INTEGRA (which targeted vulnerable and disadvantaged groups).

Two Rounds of EMPLOYMENT (with additional competitive funding made available to Round 2 projects for Joint Dissemination activities in 1999) and three Rounds of ADAPT projects have been funded in GB since 1995, with the Round 2 projects completing during 2000 and Round 3 of ADAPT (unique to GB, and to support the

University for Industry concept) running into 2001. A total of 984 projects have been funded, with a total ESF commitment of 321.4 million Euro for ADAPT and 159.2 million Euro for EMPLOYMENT.

The GB ESF Unit and the European Commission were working on the successor programme to ADAPT and EMPLOYMENT, called EQUAL, during the study period, with the intention that experiences from the former programmes influence the development and implementation of the latter. At the time of writing a draft Community Initiative Programme document has been submitted to the Commission, with the first call for projects being expected in the first quarter of 2001.

1.3 FIELDWORK METHODOLOGY AND COVERAGE

The initial 1999 fieldwork featured of a combination of case study, face to face and telephone interviews and a large postal survey of projects, as follows:

- Case studies with 30 Round 1 and 2 projects – featuring interviews with project managers and national and transnational partners
- Interviews with 70 Round 1 and 2 projects, and 10 ADAPT Round 3 projects
- Postal survey with responses from 400 Round 1 and 2 projects.

Interviews took place with a range of other stakeholder individuals and organisations, including the ESF Unit, the ADAPT and EMPLOYMENT Support Units, individual ‘information recipients’ in a number of government departments and national agencies, and other evaluators undertaking related studies.

The fieldwork undertaken in 2000 was on a much smaller scale, and consisted of interviews with the following projects:

- Eight ADAPT Round 3 project managers
- Three EMPLOYMENT Joint Dissemination project managers
- Four initial case study follow-up interviews with project managers.

Interviews also took place with a range of ‘information recipients’, and members of the study team attended a number of ADAPT Round 3/Ufi dissemination events (with follow-up telephone calls taking place with a small number of attendees. The survey work took place on an anonymous basis, summary descriptions of each project being provided as Annex I.

The rest of the report is set out as follows:

- Section 2 – provides a summary of the report produced in early 2000, including the key conclusions and recommendations
- Section 3 – summarises the findings of the 2000 fieldwork by project type
- Section 4 – summarises the findings of the information recipient interviews
- Section 5 – provides our final conclusions and recommendations based on the year 2000 fieldwork.

The report also has three Annexes:

- Annex I provides the summary characteristics of the projects interviewed
- Annex II provides the interview checklists used in the fieldwork
- Annex III provides the good practice materials, which will be used by the ESF in the guidance materials produced for EQUAL.

2 SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS FINDINGS

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This section provides an overview of the findings of the 1999 fieldwork, to set the context for the 2000 findings, identify any changes in the views of the projects interviewed, and explain the different approaches illustrated by the ADAPT Round 3/Ufi and EMPLOYMENT Joint Dissemination projects.

As the Final Report described, a number of constraints influenced the ability to draw firm conclusions on the effectiveness of the programmes to date, not least as the majority of projects were still operational and may not have entered their dissemination and mainstreaming phases. The same constraints apply to elements of the 2000 fieldwork with many of the ADAPT Round 3/Ufi projects not completing until June 2001, although all the EMPLOYMENT Joint Dissemination projects and 3 of the 5 former case study follow-up projects had completed at the time of interview. Importantly, in following an approach which sought to identify and evidence vertical/policy mainstreaming, both fieldwork rounds risked under-valuing this aspect of the projects' impacts.

The key findings of the 1999 fieldwork are summarised below, including the assessment of the three central themes of innovation, transnationality and mainstreaming and the summary recommendations.

2.2 OVERVIEW OF PREVIOUS FINDINGS

While impossible to reach firm conclusions on the overall effectiveness of the programmes and their impacts, it was clear that projects under both had **provided a range of benefits and achievements** to date. In terms of **outputs**, over 15,000 ADAPT and 28,000 EMPLOYMENT beneficiaries achieved new qualifications between 1995 and 1998 alone. As demonstration projects, however, their true impact lies in the extent to which **mainstreaming** impacts are realised – where approaches developed and lessons learnt are collected, disseminated, and go on to influence practice and policy at the local, national and EU levels.

Projects displayed relatively high levels of **additionality**, with the majority (over two thirds of ADAPT and 56% of EMPLOYMENT projects interviewed) being unable to have gone ahead without ESF funding. While the projects may have gone ahead in some way (later, or on a smaller scale), just 4% of the ADAPT and 16% of EMPLOYMENT projects would have gone ahead in the absence of EC funding.

The **coverage** of the projects interviewed varied considerably, with ADAPT and EMPLOYMENT projects showing similar distributions by area covered. Approximately half of the projects interviewed were locally focused, around two fifths (36% of ADAPT and 41% of EMPLOYMENT) operated at the regional level, and between 15% (ADAPT) and 9% (EMPLOYMENT) operated at the national level. Although based on proxy measures such as partner distribution and the spread of

partner influence, this shows the majority of projects operated at the local level, although many had the potential for wider dissemination and influence.

In terms of coverage by **promoter and national project partners**, the study projects followed the national distribution, with promoters/lead partners being concentrated in the Further and Higher Education sectors for ADAPT projects and being more broadly distributed between local authorities, Further Education and voluntary sectors for EMPLOYMENT (although this masked variations in promoter/lead partner by strand, depending on the strand in question and its beneficiary focus). The programmes also acted as catalysts for local and national (as well as transnational) partnership development, with between half of EMPLOYMENT and almost two thirds of ADAPT projects interviewed developing new national partnerships to bid for and deliver their projects. With around one third of promoters in both programmes describing expanded existing partnerships to deliver their projects, ADAPT and EMPLOYMENT would appear to have stimulated new collaborative working around the majority of projects. The extent to which these new partnerships are sustained after the life of the individual projects will be the true test of their value, but evidence from the completed Round 1 projects and anecdotal descriptions of partners' future plans was positive - with most projects intending to continue working with their partners after their projects ended.

Both the processes and the regulatory context surrounding programme **administration and management** were considered as part of the evaluation, with the programmes in GB being administered on behalf of the European Commission by the ESF Unit in England and Wales and the Scottish Executive in Scotland. These responsibilities include ensuring the regulations applying to ADAPT EMPLOYMENT project specifications are adhered to, for example ensuring the eligibility of project expenditure, and showing match funding is from eligible sources. The Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) is also responsible for the collection of monitoring information, including the characteristics of beneficiaries and the outcomes they achieve, to monitor the effectiveness of ESF expenditure.

The programme is supported by the **ADAPT and EMPLOYMENT Support Units** based in ECOTEC Research and Consulting in Birmingham, who play a central role in the delivery of both programmes and undertake a range of complex and potentially conflicting tasks - not least in providing support to projects and monitoring their performance. Levels of awareness of, and satisfaction with, the services provided by the Support Units were high, with 91% of the projects being satisfied with assistance received during project implementation. While a number of elements of their role were viewed less positively, these often referred to projects' earlier experiences where remedial change had taken place. One issue which continued to be raised was the potential conflict between the Support Units' monitoring role and their role in providing advice and support to projects – although the benefits of this dual role in providing targeted support to projects was recognised.

The **three themes of innovation, transnationality and mainstreaming** are central to the ADAPT and EMPLOYMENT programmes, with innovative approaches providing lessons which can be communicated and exchanged on a local and transnational basis

before having an impact on both practice and policy through mainstreaming. Each of the themes were examined in detail across each programme:

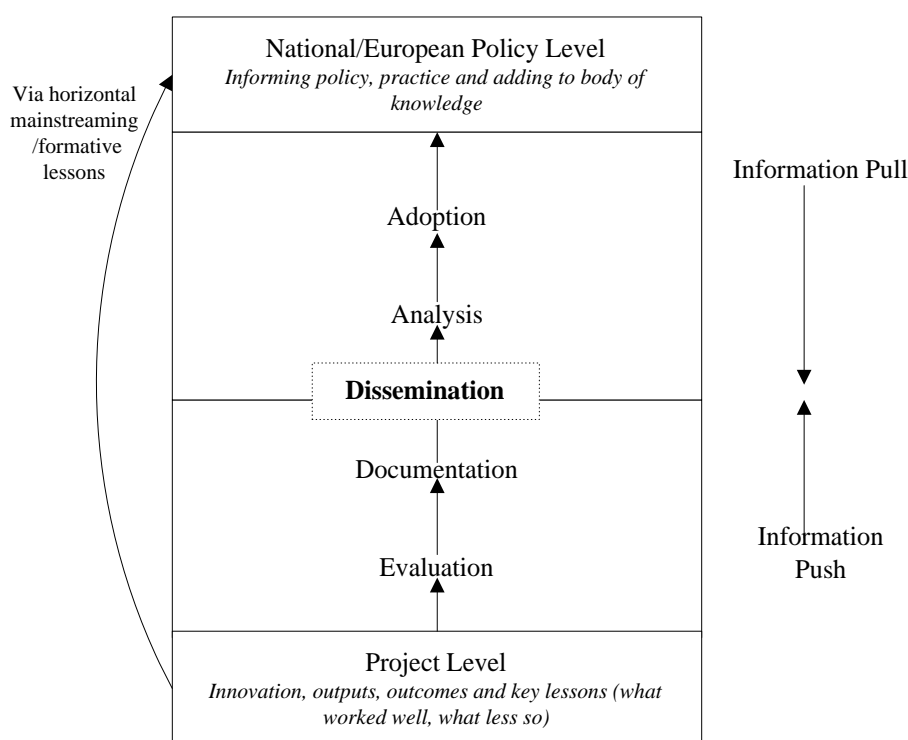
- In examining **innovation**, the projects were found to most commonly feature process oriented innovations (relating to the development of new methods, such as training materials and approaches), with ADAPT projects most commonly developing wholly new approaches and EMPLOYMENT projects more new combinations of existing approaches. This may result from ADAPT's focus on industrial change, which as a newer policy area than labour market intervention offered a greater opportunity for new approaches. The projects surveyed commonly showed considerable potential for influence and application at the policy or operational levels, with over 80% of all projects having relevance in their sector or beyond.
- While more than half of the projects had prior experience of **transnational** working, they often had limited expectations of the benefits these activities could bring. This was reflected in limited initial ambitions for transnational activities, with projects commonly focusing on exchanging information rather than attempting to develop projects jointly. However, despite these limited expectations, projects commonly described the benefits of their transnational collaboration as exceeding them. A range of approaches to, and experience of, transnational partnership development were described, with the GB and EU support structures playing important roles in supplying details of potential partners and more intensive partnership brokerage. The introduction of the project development stage for Round 2 of the programmes allowed transnational partnerships to be developed after initial project approval, and was particularly welcome given the requirement for individual partners to bid successfully in their own Member States and the risks to partnership development this carried. Once transnational partnerships were established a number of **barriers** to their effectiveness were identified – including cultural differences (such as different working practices, new political and legal environments, etc) and language difficulties, with the most influential being the lack of complementarity between partners and unequal partner contributions.
- **Mainstreaming** is the process, summarised in Figure 2.1, by which approaches developed and lessons learnt from ADAPT and EMPLOYMENT projects are disseminated and enter the policy formulation process at the local, national and EU levels. While central to programme success, assessing mainstream impacts is difficult for a number of reasons, including the timing of the study (the majority of projects were still on-going); projects' awareness of their own influence; attributing dissemination and mainstreaming activities to effects; and projects' tendencies to exaggerate their impacts. Nevertheless, a number of **mainstream impacts** were identified that could be classified as **horizontal** (aimed at project promoters, partners, or other organisations with related interests, largely on a local or regional basis) or **vertical** (aimed at the national policy level, and less easily achieved by projects independently).

The majority of the mainstream impacts identified were **horizontal**, with over half the ADAPT and three quarters of EMPLOYMENT projects describing a

range of new products and services, changes in existing approaches and the adoption of lessons learnt at the local or regional levels.

Vertical mainstreaming, however, was more difficult to identify and attribute, and examples of projects having influences at the national level were less frequently identified (9% of ADAPT and 28% of EMPLOYMENT projects). A number of important examples were identified, however, of influences on national policies including the development of the New Start initiative, national childcare strategy, and the framework for Early Years training. Such examples were, however, largely confined to DfEE. Few examples of vertical mainstreaming were identified at the European level.

Figure 2.1: Schematic of Project Mainstreaming Process



Source: GHK, after FHVR/NEI

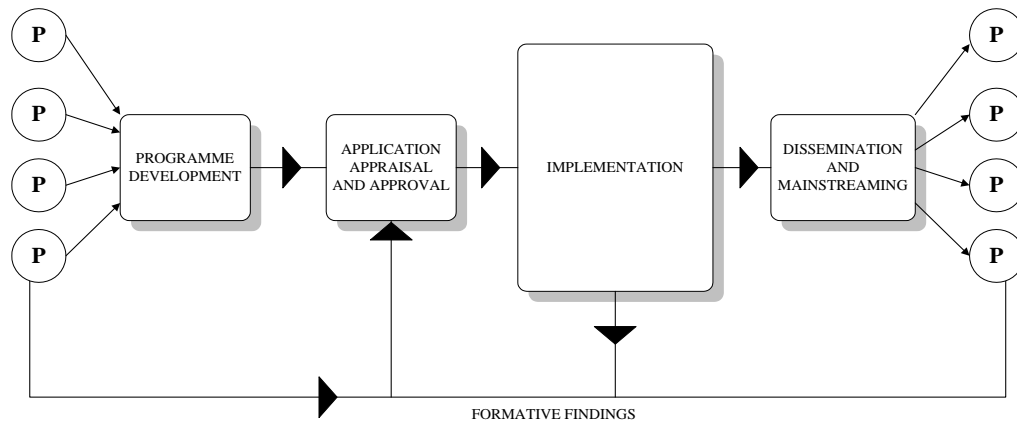
2.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

The report contained a number of recommendations referring to different elements of the programme, many set within the context of the next programming period and the implementation of the new Community Initiative EQUAL. The principal recommendations referred to the mainstreaming process, although others were made for different areas of activity. Examples of the recommendations are provided below.

2.3.1 Mainstreaming

The **principal recommendation** proposed a model which promotes policy maker and influencer involvement in both the development of programmes/projects and the utilisation of their findings, as well as helping ensure that project ideas fit with current and medium term policy requirements. A schematic outlining the suggested approach is shown as Figure 2.2 below.

Figure 2.2: Schematic of Proposed Programme Cycle



P = Policy maker/potential information recipient

The approach has four key stages:

- **Identifying policy makers/influencers** – who are best placed to contribute to programme development at the GB level, and helping widen the spread of organisations involved in the programme.
- **Policy input to programme development** - with policy makers suggesting potential policy and associated operational areas for inclusion in the programme. For example, three scenarios could be presented - current policy requirements, medium-term expected policy requirements, and topics to inform the broader body of knowledge on a policy area. Guidance materials would then encapsulate the policy foci identified, and include exemplar projects to help ensure relevance.
- **Policy input to the appraisal process** - in terms of providing clear project requirements, against which applications can be assessed.
- **Policy targets for formative and final dissemination** – as projects commonly described identifying policy makers as a key barrier to vertical mainstreaming, and vice versa, the proposed approach would help the identification of both policy makers and projects for formative and final dissemination.

The approach has resource implications, although initial interviews with policy makers suggested this would be a worthwhile investment.

Other recommendations for mainstreaming included:

- featuring information on dissemination and mainstreaming in future guidance documents, including the initial guidance for applicants

- continuing the involvement of support providers in facilitating mainstreaming, with additional efforts being made to communicate their remit to projects
- expanding the available project information to best meet the needs of enquirers
- including a short Executive Summary in final evaluation reports, outlining the key findings, what worked well and what less so, and particular areas where the findings could be useful.

2.3.2 Delivery Process

Recommendations included:

- **Application Preparation**
 - introducing a two stage application process, with an initial short submission outlining the project idea being appraised before a full submission produced.
 - simplifying application forms, with associated guidance being as straightforward and jargon free as possible
 - continuing to communicate the availability of support with application preparation to all potential applicants
- **The Appraisal Process**
 - continuing to provide feedback from appraisers to promoters on their applications, both successful and unsuccessful
 - recognising that the appraisal process takes place within a wider context of overall programme development, projects should be informed of the results of their appraisal, both successful and unsuccessful, as soon as possible
- **The Approval Process**
 - reducing delays in the approval process or, where delay is inevitable, projects be informed of the likely duration
 - including the development stage or equivalent in future project approval approaches

2.3.3 Project Support and the Role of the Support Units

A series of recommendations were made for the provision of technical support, primarily for consideration in establishing provision for the new programming round. These recommendations included:

- **Communications**
 - ensuring adequate staffing is provided to both staff the telephone helplines and ensure calls are returned within a reasonable time
- **Responsiveness**
 - planning the management of periods of peak load, such as application submission and final claim periods, in future support arrangements, with additional staff being fully trained to the necessary level to complete their tasks
 - establishing a fast track decision making process between the Support Units and ESF Unit, to enable decisions to be made and communicated to projects rapidly

- **Perceptions of the Support Unit Role**
 - on balance, maintaining the combined support and monitoring role in future technical support arrangements, as potential synergies are considerable provided projects are clear about the support that is available to them
 - continuing to recognise the importance of face to face contact in developing relationships with projects, and make direct contact early in the implementation stage, although this will generate more demand and require additional resources.
- **Monitoring Progress**
 - making monitoring requirements as straightforward as possible, notably reducing the level of information collected to that which can be used to monitor projects effectively and meet DfEE and European Commission requirements
 - ensuring details of monitoring requirements are provided prior to implementation, and that they remain fixed for the duration of the project
 - ensuring that both quantitative and qualitative monitoring information is collected, recognising the role of each in assessing the project progress
 - reviewing the current approach for the collection of evidence on private sector match funding, following problems in evidencing in-kind contributions.
- **Project Visits**
 - increasing the frequency of project visits to a minimum of two per project in any future arrangements, and continuing to undertake additional visits where deemed necessary (e.g. if project promoters are new to ESF programmes).
 - establishing an 'account management' approach to project support, with projects having a single, individual point of contact for their support requirements
 - introducing a more structured approach to the scheduling of project visits - ensuring maximum benefit to projects, with less experienced projects, or those where difficulties have been identified, being visited first and/or more frequently.

2.3.4 Thematic Review

In addition to those regarding mainstreaming, recommendations were produced for innovation and transnationality, including:

- **Innovation**
 - including clear guidance on innovation in guidance materials, including examples of potential projects, but not so prescriptive as to constrain creativity
 - ensuring promoters and partners are clear on the demonstration objectives of projects, so lessons are not lost or become secondary to achieving outputs
 - making it possible for projects to fail - as much can be learnt from innovative approaches which are not successful as those which are
 - seeking ways to facilitate transnational partner involvement in the innovation development process from the outset
 - seeking ways in which the requirements of ESF can be made more flexible to stimulate and maintain innovation.

- **Transnationality**

- continuing the pre-approval project development phase
- synchronising the programme implementation and approval processes between Member States, to allow for shared implementation timetables
- reviewing the EUROPS database, improving the search criteria, and potentially including references from previous transnational partners
- providing targeted support for promoters new to transnational collaboration, via the relevant support structure and matching with more experienced partners
- describing the positive benefits of transnational collaboration in any guidance materials, in the form of case studies and best practice tips.

A number of the recommendations described feature in the latest draft plans for the new Community Initiative EQUAL. In this context, the fieldwork undertaken in 2000 concentrated on the topic of mainstreaming, to examine if additional lessons could be identified to inform the fine grain planning of the new initiative, albeit drawn from a smaller interview sample. The lessons emerging are discussed in the following Section.

3 KEY FINDINGS

This section provides a summary of the findings of the interviews with the project sample described in Section 1, namely:

- Eight ADAPT Round 3 projects
- Three EMPLOYMENT Joint Dissemination projects
- Four case study follow-ups – Round 2 ADAPT, HORIZON and YOUTHSTART projects and an ADAPT Round 3 project.

In addition a number of information recipients were contacted, to identify the extent to which lessons from projects had influenced the development of national policy and practice, and to corroborate the views of the individual projects. The findings from these interviews are described in Section 4. The findings are described below by programme, commencing with the ADAPT Round 3 projects.

3.1 ADAPT ROUND 3 PROJECTS

3.1.1 Introduction

The initial project fieldwork included interviews with 10 ADAPT Round 3 projects, which at the time of the first fieldwork had been operational for approximately 12 months, and so were some way from their main dissemination and mainstreaming stages.

The specific characteristics of ADAPT Round 3 make it particularly interesting as a potential model for dissemination and mainstreaming, unique within the ADAPT programme Europe-wide. As the initial report described, Round 3 allowed aspects of the University for Industry (Ufi) model to be tested across 169 projects within the ADAPT objective framework. The ADAPT/Ufi model included a number of the features of the proposed programme cycle described in the earlier recommendations, including the potential for:

- The establishment of clear information/policy targets from the outset
- The establishment of a dissemination infrastructure to assist the exchange and utilisation of key learning points
- Opportunities for both formative and summative learning opportunities
- Clear policy targets for final dissemination activities

The extent to which these opportunities have been realised to date, and any lessons for their effective implementation as part of EQUAL and other programme areas, were examined in the interviews with both projects and information recipients.

In this context, and given their relative under-representation in the earlier fieldwork, the bulk of the 2000 fieldwork was dedicated to working with Round 3 projects. The fieldwork consisted of interviews with eight Round 3 projects, attending a number of national dissemination events organised by Ufi and the ADAPT Support Unit, and

follow-up conversations with a small sample of attendees. Brief descriptions of the projects interviewed are summarised in Annex I.

3.1.2 Key Findings

The key findings from the project interviews are set out by the headings below.

Performance and Main Achievements

Although the projects were still on-going, **most project managers were confident they would reach their performance targets** (all but two of the eight cases). In both cases of slippage the difficulties of working with SMEs were cited as key reasons – in one their targets had already been reduced by one third via the Significant Change procedure, and in the other qualification targets were proving difficult given SMEs' reluctance to commit resources to accredited training.

Projects described a range of **issues influencing project delivery**, with **engaging with potential SME clients** being one of the most frequently mentioned difficulties, and clients often limited knowledge of ICT-based learning approaches made this market particularly hard to crack. As one project described, it was “difficult to convince SMEs of immediate returns from their involvement” in the project. In other cases the **levels of technology** available in SMEs were so low as to make their first dealings with projects more about awareness raising than delivery, although this provided a useful “reality check” about ICT capacity in the SME market and the need to tailor on-line materials accordingly.

Transnational Activities

The requirements for **transnational collaboration were different** under Round 3, with minimum requirements being relaxed and a focus on transnational learning rather than joint project development and delivery. This was reflected in projects' levels of transnational activity, with **most being limited to attendance at and invitations to dissemination events, conferences and workshops**. However, three reported closer collaborative working on a more formalised basis – either in the form of joint multi-channel dissemination strategies and networks through to joint development of project ideas. For example, projects were identified featuring transnational awareness raising functions, the collaborative development of training materials (between partners in three Member States), and where transnational partners were involved in the development of the bid and project concept.

These transnational activities had already lead to benefits in a number of cases, over and above the direct project activities. Benefits included:

- Information sharing – as fits most common ‘communication based’ model
- Sharing identified good practice – although this was widely felt to be of most use in future projects/activities
- Access to European networks and potential future partners – with two projects having already undertaken new collaborative work resulting from the transnational partnership developed under Round 3

Dissemination

Although the Round 3 projects interviewed do not complete until June 2001, most had already been involved in formative dissemination activities. These included:

- Local, regional and national dissemination events – including a range of early conferences, exhibitions and other events, arranged by individual projects, regional co-ordinators and thematic groupings, and centrally by Ufi with the assistance of the ADAPT Support Unit.
- Project visits – mainly between national partners, but some transnational meetings and conferences
- Networking – including existing local and regional networks, thematic cluster groups (such as learner support, basic skills, SME and marketing/evaluation groups), and some integration into transnational networks. Projects also described links into pre-existing sector/thematic networks (eg with the NIACE/construction industry on a sector specific project)
- Producing journals and newsletters – distributed on a local, national and in some cases transnational basis
- Producing reports and various good practice guides – either by the projects themselves, or by contribution to the work of the Support Unit or Ufi centrally
- The development of websites
- Meetings between project partners – in many cases steering meetings were also a focus for the exchange of findings and emerging good practice.

Projects' views on the effectiveness of the different dissemination approaches varied considerably, ranging from positive to questioning the effectiveness of the approach selected. Two shortcomings of ADAPT/Ufi events were mentioned most commonly:

- Their project to project nature – for example one project considered that dissemination at ADAPT/Ufi events was mostly between projects, which although useful in early development stages and for exchanging practice did little to serve the mainstreaming objectives. In the project's view, much could be gained from not only inviting policy influencers but also featuring beneficiaries in these events.
- Focus and level of detail – for example one project was disappointed that the events attended failed to find solutions to individual problems, and instead described the same issues repeatedly. The example quoted was of engaging with SME beneficiaries – with the project describing that it was of little use reiterating the problems of SME engagement and more valuable to hear how projects had negotiated this barrier.

Utilisation and Impact

In the view of the consultants, the Round 3 projects showed considerable mainstreaming potential, with:

- Three rating high – ie. applicable to the project's target and other sectors
- Three rating medium – ie. potential to be applied in target sector
- Two rating low – limited potential, to extension of current project only.

In terms of impact, it is important to remember that the projects were still being delivered, with many only completing in June 2001. Nevertheless, as the previous text described, many had undertaken quite advanced dissemination activities, and so an assessment of mainstream impacts to date could be made.

The projects were able to evidence their mainstream impact as follows:

- **Impact on practice** – five projects were able to provide evidence of impacting on practice locally and regionally (ie between partners or agencies in the individual partner areas/regions); and two at EU level (although evidence less robust). Projects were less clear on their influence on national practice, although these were picked up in the interviews with information recipients, as described in Section 4.
- **Impact on policy** – far fewer projects felt they had had any influence on policy at any level, with two describing how they had an influence on national policy and one on local/regional policy.

Examples of the achievements of the projects interviewed included:

- Improving access and accessibility to ICT training opportunities
- Developing and trialling new procedures for on-line working
- Improving local capacity
- New/improved approaches to delivery to target groups
- Informing development of Ufi
- Raising awareness/debate around new sectors
- Policy development – Ufi and wider (for example sustainable energy)

Based on the evidence provided by individual projects (and corroborated in the information recipient interviews described in Section 4) it appears that **ADAPT Round 3 projects are having a considerable influence** on the development of policy and practice both locally, regionally and nationally for the University for Industry.

3.2 EMPLOYMENT JOINT DISSEMINATION PROJECTS

3.2.1 Introduction

At the end of 1999 a call was made for new, collaborative EMPLOYMENT projects to support additional evaluation, dissemination and mainstreaming activities. A total 58 responses were received from Round 2 project promoters, on behalf of partnerships featuring two or more EMPLOYMENT projects (across all strands, but commonly within a single strand or following a similar theme), with 54 projects receiving approval. Project promoters were broadly evenly distributed by strands, and by sector concentrated between local authorities (30%), the voluntary and community sector (22%), FE Colleges (16%) and HE institutions (10%). Other promoters included charitable bodies, national representative bodies and an NHS trust.

A range of both partnership members were involved and activities undertaken across the Joint Dissemination projects and a comparatively short project time period, including the planning and delivery of joint dissemination events, collaborative research, extending projects' evaluation exercises to feature comparisons between different approaches, and in some cases moving delivery models towards implementation across a wider range of agencies. While many of the projects retained a local/regional focus (ie. consisting of partners within the same locality or region), others worked on a national basis and were based on wholly new collaborative working arrangements.

Clearly an interview sample of three of over 50 projects means any findings should be treated as indicative, but could still provide insights into the potential of joint dissemination and mainstreaming approaches between projects.

3.2.2 Key Findings

The key findings from the project interviews are set out below.

Project Origin and Development

Each of the projects interviewed consisted of partners from the same EMPLOYMENT strands, although the partners were identified in different ways:

- Project 1 – this partnership consisted of five INTEGRA projects, two based in the same area, two in another region and identified via the Support Unit (although these later dropped out), and a fifth joining the partnership later.
- Project 2 – this partnership consisted of two NOW projects (who met during Round 2) and a transnational partner (identified from a shared thematic group on family learning)
- Project 3 – a larger eight member partnership, comprising four GB YOUTHSTART projects (in three different regions) and transnational partners in Spain, Italy, Germany and Ireland. The projects first 'met' at a Support Unit event, although links existed prior to this through personal and intermediary contacts.

The projects had different aims and approaches:

- Project 1 sought to develop and test a model of empowerment evaluation, and disseminate the results
- Project 2 was more delivery focused, targeting families with children of primary or nursery school age with a range of activities around the concept of family learning, including roadshows, regional events, best practice workshops, the development of learning networks and a website.
- Project 3 aimed to identify good practice and key success factors in FE, Pre-vocational and Work Based training in youth programmes with the intention of informing the development of Connexions. Their approach included evaluation research, the production of a dissemination and information pack, and a transnational conference to present findings to providers and policy makers.

Performance and Main Achievements

All three projects had completed at the time of interview, and had achieved the majority of their aims with only minor issues outstanding (for example, in one an unfinished website and in another a delayed evaluation report). Two of the projects encountered delivery issues which influenced their overall effectiveness:

- Project 1 lost two of its partners due to problems with match funding, and staffing difficulties with the lead partner at the start of the project exacerbated delivery pressures in what was already a comparatively short delivery timescale.
- Project 2 found the difference in focus between its two GB partners (one working with an Early Years target group, the other with an older group) a barrier to joint working and wider networking.

Views on the **main achievements** of their projects varied between interviewees:

- Project 1 felt they had demonstrated the effectiveness of an empowerment approach to evaluation, where beneficiaries take a central role in the evaluation process, which had considerable potential for wider application.
- Project 2 felt their main achievement had been to spread awareness of family learning, and the need to widen the existing focus away from the individual. Their work had led to the lead partner becoming involved in a further widening participation project, as well as “grabbing them a seat at the regional policy table” alongside the emerging Learning and Skills Council and other strategic partners.
- Project 3’s main achievements were to extend and broaden the networking activities, and working relationships, between the partners, and keep individual members of staff up to date with latest thinking and practice. This has already led to a number of new project ideas being taken forward on a collaborative basis.

Interviewees were able to identify a number of **key success factors** in the **delivery** of their projects, some of which were specific to their particular approach/activity and others which were more generic. The more generic factors included ensuring complementarity and a common philosophy and purpose between project partners; strong leadership and commitment amongst project staff; and ensuring the equal

distribution of tasks between partners. Projects also identified a number of success factors for **dissemination activities**, including the importance of holding a headline event (such as a national conference); establishing a platform from which ideas can develop; having a willingness to share both success and failure; ringfencing dissemination funds; and being positive and optimistic people!

Dissemination

Given the nature of the projects, it was unsurprising that they had all been involved in a **wide range of dissemination activities** at local, regional, national and even transnational levels. One initial concern, however, was the extent to which partners' own dissemination plans had been displaced by their involvement in their Joint Dissemination project. Amongst the projects interviewed it would appear this had not been the case, and the activities undertaken **were additional** to what would have taken place anyway.

Clearly the dissemination activities undertaken relied on the approaches deemed most suitable by the individual projects. Project 1, for example, had a research focus and sought to develop and test a model of empowerment evaluation, and its dissemination activities were kept between partnership members and the development of a website.

Projects 2 and 3 followed a more 'open' dissemination approach, mainly locally and regionally for Project 2 and nationally and transnationally for Project 3. Both followed a range of approaches including: headline conferences and other events (local and national); roadshows; national and regional networking; and the development of websites. Both projects had included their transnational partners in their dissemination activities, although on different scales:

- Project 3 included their transnational partners in their dissemination activities, attended/presented at events in all four partner Member States, and included worker exchanges/work study visits between the national partners
- Project 2 included their transnational partner in a workshop/group visit event, although this was the only contact with them as joint working had been limited.

Utilisation and Impact

As with earlier elements of the study, any assessment of the ultimate impact of the projects via mainstream effects is hindered by a number of issues described previously. Within this context, the three projects followed the pattern described in the first evaluation report, where **impacts were predominantly local** (to the project partners) and **practice focused**, with little evidence of influence at the national level or on policy development.

- Project 1's main influence was on local (partner) practice, which was disappointing given the potential of empowerment evaluation. The project had attempted to stimulate DfEE interest via the Support Unit but to no avail, with the familiar problem of identifying suitable individuals leading to an opportunity being missed.

- Project 2 hoped to have some influence on local policy (mainly via the new Learning and Skills Council), and were due to meet with the Support Unit soon after their interview to discuss further mainstreaming opportunities. They had experienced problems in influencing local practice, with financial and institutional structures acting as barriers to local mainstreaming.
- Project 3's main influence was again on practice, predominantly between partners and at the local/regional level despite their transnational dissemination activities, although having potential for wider policy influence. This was a disappointment to the project partners – who hoped to have some impact at the “big picture level” – especially given the project's potential for wider influence.

The projects described receiving **little support with their mainstreaming efforts**, partly due to the short timescales but mainly to the lack of information on suitable policy contacts. Project 3 were particularly disappointed on this front – despite their partners' involvement in thematic focus groups they were unclear on potential ‘audiences’ for their findings, and commented there was the need for effective national or regional networks. They had not received any information on dissemination targets from the Support Unit, although the pre-start guidance materials featured a list of potential target organisations. Clearly the project had an expectation that the relevant DfEE staff would be available given the dissemination focus of this round of projects.

3.3 CASE STUDY FOLLOW-UP PROJECTS

3.3.1 Introduction

The first round of fieldwork featured case study interviews with 30 ADAPT and EMPLOYMENT projects, many of which were concentrating on their implementation stages. To allow progress to be assessed since the first visit, and examine the extent to which the projects had achieved vertical or horizontal mainstream impacts, a sample of four previous case study projects were re-contacted and interviewed. The sample was drawn from the initial Round 2 and 3 project case studies, and consisted of one Round 2 ADAPT project, one ADAPT Round 3 project, and two EMPLOYMENT Round 2 projects (one HORIZON and one YOUTHSTART projects).

Again, although the sample size was small the interviews aimed to identify new information around project delivery, dissemination approaches and mainstreaming impacts.

3.3.2 Review of First Contacts

The box below provides a summary of the four projects interviewed, based on their original interviews to set the context for their follow-up contacts.

Project Summaries

Project 1 - this university-led HORIZON project concentrated on improving approaches to the employment of disabled individuals at senior levels in the tourism, leisure, heritage and recreation sectors. This involved examining employer attitudes to and awareness of training and recruitment approaches to the target group, the development of training materials to support flexible careers in the sector, and the development of peer mentoring/counselling with transnational partners. The project developed out of a LEONARDO project, and featured two GB and five transnational partners (via EUROPS database after first partner's home bid failed). At the time of original interview, the project had been involved in a series of conferences and dissemination events, with some evidence of influencing approaches to mentoring with a national organisation.

Project 2 - this large university-led Round 2 ADAPT project worked at the regional level to provide a flexible and comprehensive portfolio of innovative training and information products to employees and managers in SMEs. The project featured an action research element, with resulting products being disseminated at the national and international levels, and building on a previous initiative to provide access to training opportunities in a rural setting. The project had five transnational partners, identified primarily via the Europs database. At the time of interview the project was in the early stages of dissemination, with communications concentrating at the local level with no national or transnational activity as yet.

Project 3 - this ADAPT Round 3 project set out to develop and test new knowledge and learning systems in supply chains within the automotive sector. The project aimed to develop benchmarking tools, learning materials, best practice scenarios and methodologies within a UfI context to help SMEs adapt to new requirements resulting from fundamental changes within supply chains in the sector. The project had a series of challenging objectives, including: establishing national and transnational partner networks, an employer network across four regions and knowledge networks of large companies and their SME suppliers; establishing a supply chain skills observatory; developing multi-media benchmarking tools for SME managers and three sets of 'on-line learning' materials; and pilot the

methodologies, materials and products developed through programmes involving large companies, SMEs, trainers and employees.

Project 4 - this college-led project built on a previous Round 1 YOUTHSTART project, working with the same GB partners to target the most disaffected young people of school leaving age (attending school or not) in a notorious part of a Scottish city. Beneficiaries were to be offered an alternative to school, based on a six month project combining personal development, fun group and 'creative and dynamic' activities and vocational training linked to business and work experience. Parents and guardians were encouraged to participate as much as possible. Many of the client group could be described as the 'third generation unemployed', and a reflection of how disaffected/disturbed the client group are was illustrated by the fact that of one group of 16 beneficiaries, seven had witnessed murders, some within their own families. The project planned to run four groups of 16 young people over its lifetime.

The projects described many of the features, success factors and barriers identified across the wider sample group, for example:

- **Transnational Partnership** – two of the projects described losing transnational partners in the early stage of project development (due to failure to gain approval in own Member States), which in one case led to new partners being identified with whom the GB partners had little in common. In another project their transnational partners turned out to have less in common than had been expected, and the lack of complementarity reduced the partnership's potential.
- **Dissemination and Mainstreaming** – although still in the delivery phases, the projects had undertaken initial dissemination activities to varying extents and illustrated the importance of formative dissemination. However, early impacts had been predominantly locally focussed and practice based, although one had a wider influence via informing developments in a national sector body. While most of the projects expressed the desire to communicate their findings more widely and have an influence on national policy, they were unclear how best this could be achieved.

3.3.3 Key Findings

The key findings from the case study follow-up interviews are described below.

Performance and Main Achievements

In all but one case (the ADAPT Round 3 project, which completes in June 2001) the projects had completed, having broadly achieved their objectives and quantitative output targets. Some variations were identified – some where the Significant Change process had been followed and new targets agreed, and another where their dissemination plans had been truncated.

Project's views of their main achievements varied, from the practical (developing new training approaches and sector specific outputs, for example, in Project 2) to the strategic (engaging companies in a specific sector, and sustaining this engagement in Project 3, or changing attitudes towards work and education for individual beneficiaries and partners, as in Project 4).

Delivery Issues

As the earlier text illustrated, the projects described a number of common delivery issues in their first interviews, some of which had continued to influence their progress and the achievement of their goals. In others, more positive experiences of delivery were reported, with one nationally recognised example of good project management practice which informed practice in other ESF projects.

In terms of **barriers**, one project (2) described how **delays around the final approval for the project** (combined with a reluctance on the part of the promoter to incur cost prior to this) led to a delay of over 12 months before the project could begin. Although granted an extension on their original timeplan, this was only for 6 months and meant implementation had to be compressed.

A second (1) described how their initial problems with establishing a **transnational partnership** had influenced their transnational activities throughout the project. Having lost both of their original transnational partners due to unsuccessful bids in their home states, the GB project entered a “partnership of last resort” with two partners they did not know and with whom they shared few similarities. These initial difficulties were magnified in the later stages of the project, with the transnational partners seeing their collaboration as “gestural” and leaving the bulk of the co-ordinating role to the GB project. In addition, project extensions meant that the partners completed at different times, and the GB project was left to complete on its own. With hindsight the project manager felt they had been naïve in taking the transnational co-ordination role, and although in this case negative had provided them with a useful experience of transnational collaboration.

The common problem of **attracting and engaging with SMEs** was an issue for both ADAPT projects, although Project 3 identified useful lessons in their work with supply chains within the automotive sector. Here the slow rate of engagement with SMEs had delayed the establishment of the early supply chain networks. On reflection, the project manager described how they found engaging with larger companies first, then using them to access their smaller suppliers, had proved to be a promising approach which could have wider currency.

Dissemination

Each of the projects had described their intended approaches to dissemination activities in their initial applications, and had been involved in some dissemination activity at the time of the first visit as described in the earlier project summaries. In terms of original intentions:

- Project 1 placed a high priority on impacting on policy makers in the sector in their original bid. This would be achieved by using Steering Group members as intermediaries to influence policy and practice locally and nationally (such as representatives of the Higher Education Funding Council sector team and regional tourism bodies), as well as networking to influence a range of regional and national sector agencies. Dissemination activities planned included a regional

conference, publicity in both general and specialist media, as well as through the intermediaries described above.

- Project 2 was primarily a regional project with a focus on expanding rural training opportunities, although their initial bid described the intention to examine options for the wider distribution of the resulting products and services. In terms of impacts on policy, the focus was primarily at the local and individual SME level, although the project described the intention to contact “appropriate decision makers” at national and EU levels.
- As an ADAPT Round 3 project, Project 3 was still operational at the time of interview and involved in the ADAPT/Ufi dissemination infrastructure. At the time of initial interview the project had also engaged with a number of major motor manufacturers, sector groups and industry bodies as active partners in the project. Other potential targets for mainstreaming include the DTI (for example via automotive sector interest groupings) and the automotive industry (through the development of new tools and learning materials, and via large assemblers, SME suppliers and industry groups engaged directly with the project and via networks).
- Project 4 was a Scottish project with a strong regional focus, with plans to disseminate primarily to local partners and agencies. The potential for wider influences on practice was identified early in the project, primarily through a regional YOUTHSTART forum and end of project events.

The extent to which these intentions had been achieved was discussed with the three completed projects, and progress towards them discussed with the fourth. Of the three completed projects, two described broadly undertaking the range of activities planned while one had cancelled their final national conference due to difficulties attracting sufficient numbers of delegates. In terms of coverage, all three had held or presented at national conferences, although the majority of their work taking place at the local and regional levels. For example:

- Project 2 disseminated its findings as 12 individual projects and one overall project, mainly at the regional level. Although their final national conference was cancelled, they presented their formative findings nationally, and circulated written reports in place of the cancelled conference. Although the project had been unsuccessful in developing national policy contacts, they had made some useful contacts with regional Ufi representatives.
- Project 4 ran a series of events for local and transnational partners, and presented to senior officials of the Italian government, although most dissemination work was locally and practice focused. They were involved in a particularly active regional YOUTHSTART network, which led to some regional policy contacts, and attended two national events as part of their final activities.

The remaining project will be completing in June 2001, and as an ADAPT Round 3 project had been involved in the dissemination infrastructure managed by Ufi (including active membership of the Automotive Sector Strategy Group). The project also was also benefiting from the mix of major manufacturers, suppliers, sector groups and industry bodies as active partners. The project had also engaged with the DTI, although commented that even from their established sector base and Ufi connections it remained difficult and time consuming to find the right people to disseminate their findings to. Although the minimum transnational requirements of

Round 3 projects were relaxed, the project have worked closely with their transnational partners and plan a major seminar in Spain featuring the DTI, industry bodies and large vehicle assemblers around the subject of supply chain management.

Utilisation and Impact

In the consultants' opinion, Projects 1, 2 and 4 rated medium in terms of potential utilisation (with potential to be applied to the target sector), with Project 3 rating highly (with potential to the target sector and beyond). All of the projects were able to evidence some form of influence on **practice** locally, with Project 3 already having some national influence through its own efforts and via the Ufi network. At the **policy** level influence appeared to be limited, although Project 3 was confident they would have an influence prior to their completion. The main influences cited by the projects are summarised below:

- Project 1 described how their early dissemination work had influenced approaches to mentoring with their target group at a national disabled organisation, although since the first meeting their attempts to develop a transnational mentoring approach was less successful. However their approach was communicated to, and influenced a national programme developed by, DfEE - although their main impacts had been on the practices followed by the lead and partner organisations. There was little evidence that the use of steering group members to communicate findings and influence policy had resulted in any mainstream impacts.
- Project 2's main influences were again on local practice, although they claimed to have had an influence at the national level through contact with the VAS team (see below). The project's main dissemination event (a regional conference) was cancelled due to insufficient interest amongst potential delegates, and although described having little influence on policy they were more optimistic that through the membership of various regional committees their partners could spread the lessons from the project more widely.
- Project 4's main impacts were on local and regional practice, through their involvement in a strong regional YOUTHSTART network. This influence was evidenced locally through the continued commitment of the project partners to continue their networking activities once the project had completed. There was, at least to the project's knowledge, little evidence that the regional network had influenced national policy.

The project was disappointed at the failure to influence policy – a planned regional mini-symposium for policy makers did not take place – although the project attended the YOUTHSTART National Conference and a separate event for Scottish projects. In the view of the project, the missed opportunity to influence policy was due to the programme funding mechanisms – at the end of the project no staff remained to feed in their experiences and review and assess the content of the various reports produced by the project. In terms of improving policy influence, the project felt that specific meetings with policy makers were essential – a view also expressed in the previous information recipient interviews.
- Project 3, while still on-going, felt it was too early to identify practical or policy impacts, although they were confident of having future impacts in GB and across

the EU. They included their SME and large organisational employer contacts as targets for future influence, as well as the ADAPT Round 3/Ufi dissemination infrastructure and the DTI, where communications had already taken place.

The projects also identified a series of spin-off benefits, which in common with the previous fieldwork included the development of new networks and partnerships (some related to new bidding opportunities), experience of collaborative working both in GB and transnationally, and the opportunity to examine new ways of operating within their specific sectors. Examples of more specific spin-off benefits included:

- Involvement in **EMPLOYMENT Joint Dissemination projects** – two of the projects were involved in developing projects for this call, although one “fizzled out” and the project took no part in its implementation. The second project (1) worked with an NHS Trust and regional tourism bodies to take their work forward, looking at the employment of disabled people in the tourism industry from the employers’ perspective.
- Project 2 described how they had worked with 12 individual sub-projects within a **management structure and series of specially developed subcontract arrangements**. The ESF VAS team recommended the project as an example of good practice in contracting within project partners, and in setting up and managing a complex project more widely. The project manager also believed that they had influenced the development of co-financing proposals under ESF.

4 INFORMATION RECIPIENTS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The initial fieldwork featured interviews with individuals who had made use of the findings of ADAPT and EMPLOYMENT projects, to provide an insight into mainstream impacts and processes from the ‘policy influencer’s’ perspective. The interviews also helped to ‘square the circle’ between the experiences of projects (whose knowledge of their own influence may be incomplete) and their potential audience, who may receive information through a range of channels.

The 2000 fieldwork followed a similar approach, with interviews taking place with 13 individuals – five from Ufi and eight from a range of organisations, primarily Government departments. In addition, a number of individuals interviewed for the first report were re-contacted again. The interview sample came from two main sources – a list prepared by the ADAPT and EMPLOYMENT Support Units and the ESF Unit, and individuals identified by projects as having received information from them (although the second grouping, as in the previous fieldwork, proved to be less fruitful).

Interviews followed a loosely structured checklist which sought to identify:

- What information they had received and how they received it
- What use had been made of the information (informing policy or practice), and their views of its quality, timeliness and relevance
- Views on the dissemination and mainstreaming processes, including any areas for improvement.

The findings of these interviews are summarised below, first for the ‘generic’ recipients and second the Ufi representatives.

4.2 FINDINGS - GENERIC

The findings below refer to the experiences and perceptions of the eight individuals interviewed from across a range of organisations, including DfEE, Cabinet Office, Employment Service, Equal Opportunities Commission, DTI and the Small Business Service, each of which could be seen as prime targets for information from the ADAPT and EMPLOYMENT projects.

Four respondents were interviewed for the second time after participating in the original fieldwork, which found that:

- Individuals most commonly received project information in the form of reports from the Support Units, or by attendance at conferences and other events – although a minority described having close relationships with individual projects which were particularly useful.

- Difficulties in providing the appropriate level of detailed information were identified, although the challenges in meeting such a wide range of needs were acknowledged.
- While a number of benefits and examples of information use were identified, concerns were raised that the influence of projects was largely confined to one Department and programme awareness was patchy amongst potential policy makers.

The second interviews were undertaken against this background, and sought to identify any changes in dissemination and mainstreaming processes or their effectiveness.

4.2.1 Information Received

The four follow-up respondents received **limited additional information** over the last year, a concern given that a number of potentially relevant projects will have already completed. In one case no further information had been received since an initial contact 18 months ago, and although some social exclusion-related materials were initially sent by a Support Unit contact which ceased when the individual left the Unit.

The other interviewees described receiving information, primarily from individual projects with which they had become close or by attendance at national and regional conferences. These materials had changed to some extent, becoming more end of project focused and evaluation-based findings. In one case the interviewee had become involved in a couple of EMPLOYMENT spin-off projects and a Joint Dissemination project. For example, one TEC-lead project examined the views of young people, combining their YOUTHSTART experience with development work for the former Learning Gateway, which was successful and entered local practice. However, since the last interview no further materials had been received, and she now relies solely on her own project networks for information.

Amongst the new contacts different methods of engagement were identified, notably by attendance and presentations at national events. For example:

- One DTI contact was **invited to speak at a conference** early in the programme, where they stressed the Department's eagerness to learn from the ADAPT projects throughout their duration. However, to the individual's disappointment, this didn't happen, and despite several further contacts via the Support Unit and ADAPT secretariat no information was forthcoming. Since then the individual has received some information from the Support Unit, where a helpful contact was identified, although nothing is sent out automatically and the service has been reactive to his requests.
- One individual recently becoming involved in ADAPT projects described **responding to a 'ministerial order' to engage** with them, and had attended one event. The individual has a specific interest in the latest practice in business support (to feed into the development of the Small Business Service), notably in the ADAPT target areas of emerging industries and high technology sectors, and is hopeful that the information flow will begin soon.

4.2.2 Use and Benefits

If anything, the levels of benefit accrued and use made of the information received from projects amongst the generic group was less than that identified in the previous interviews. Where earlier contacts were followed up, the limited additional information received had **little impact on either practice or policy** as far as they were aware. In these cases benefits were constrained to:

- Limited influences on practice, collected from EMPLOYMENT spin-off projects
- The further promotion of regional networking (expanding on that described previously)
- Limited influence on mainstream agency policy, but main recent benefits have been in firming links with DfEE to promote the organisation's interests

In the case of the newer contacts, none were able to describe any influence on practice or policy, although one was optimistic some useful information would be forthcoming.

4.2.3 Key Issues

Three additional points were identified, above those described in the previous report:

- First, it was apparent from the responses of one individual, who was particularly keen to engage with ADAPT projects and had a very specific agenda, that **awareness of how to access project information remains limited** within certain Departments. In this case, the consultant undertaking the interview provided details of the ADAPT Support Unit website and telephone contact details.
- The second point referred to the **potential displacement of information relating to ICT-related initiatives** (notably the DTI Information Society Initiative) as attention is focused on Ufi. This was proposed as a reason for the lack of information flowing to an individual, with a specific interest in this area.
- Finally, one interviewee raised the issue of **comparability between projects and benchmarking**, given limited information and the absence of suitable comparators. The individual had an interest in HORIZON projects at the regional level, and wanted to know if his contact projects represented good or mediocre practice. As he described, he was “not sure if there was little new identified in (the Support Unit) reports, or if (the regional projects) are at the state of the art”.

4.2.4 Improvements

A number of potential improvements/points to be considered for other programmes emerged from the interviews, many of which re-iterate the first interview findings:

- The need to **engage with a wider policy community** – to expand beyond DfEE to include a wider selection of Departments, agencies and national bodies. Currently too many contacts were via word of mouth or based on “happy coincidence”.
- Ensure the **right people are involved/targeted** for dissemination/mainstreaming – following from the point above, it is equally important to ensure the right people (not just the organisation) are targeted. For example, a DTI representative

described how their Research and Development teams in Sheffield are best placed to co-ordinate efforts, avoid duplication and finding complementary activities.

- Recognise that **good project promoters and managers are not necessarily good disseminators**, and that support may be needed even for projects perceived as ‘good’ deliverers.
- Take a **more proactive stance on dissemination** – including the secretariat/support providers badgering projects to attend events and actively participate, and using independent workers to draw out the important lessons for projects. The interviewee felt that conferences too often became “suits talking **at** projects”, and needed to be made more participative.

4.3 FINDINGS – ADAPT ROUND 3

With its close links to the emerging Ufi model, infrastructure to support the exchange of products and findings, and specific role in testing elements of both policy and practice ADAPT Round 3 mirrored many elements of the previous recommendations around improving the mainstreaming process. The interviews with both projects and information recipients allowed these elements to be examined, to make a preliminary assessment of their effectiveness and identify lessons for the development of EQUAL.

The interview sample was developed between the ESF Unit, ADAPT Support Unit and Ufi Ltd, and included individuals based in Sheffield and London with responsibilities for different activity areas, including engaging with SMEs, on-line learner support, basic skills, and sectoral and spatial clusters. Their different interest areas reflected very different experiences and perceptions of the mainstream impacts of the Round 3 projects, as summarised below.

4.3.1 Information Received

The interviewees reported receiving information from projects through a variety of means, including conferences, workshops and other events (either national Ufi and cluster groups, regional ADAPT, or individual project dissemination events), project reports (evaluations and other reports from projects themselves, or materials produced centrally), and contact with individual projects (on a single visit or ‘watching brief’ basis).

As identified in the earlier interviews, interviewees commonly described **direct contact with projects** as the most effective means of information transfer. Again, this proximity allowed projects to be examined in detail, although this approach is clearly resource intensive and relies on the identification of suitable projects early on.

However, in the area of learner support, an approach was followed which featured an **independent field expert** collecting information from projects and providing feedback to the centre on a quarterly basis. This proved to be a useful source of information, in addition to the more ‘traditional’ approaches including national conferences, the work of the learner support cluster group.

While individuals’ expectations of the nature, quality and volume of information available varied considerably, concerns were raised regarding **the extent to which all**

projects are represented. While interviewees acknowledged that not all will produce outputs suitable for their needs, there was a concern that good information may be lost over time. Steps are currently being taken at the regional level to ensure that this does not happen, with regional representatives identifying projects which could contribute to the further development of Ufi practice and policy. Only one individual was particularly disappointed by the amount of information emerging to date from the Round 3 projects, who expected a lot more from the programme. In this case, the respondent had received useful information from only two projects.

4.3.2 Use and Benefits

Overall the interviewees felt that **a lot of good work was being done, with relevance at both the practical and policy levels.** Examples where projects had influenced or are expected to influence both practice and policy were identified, an encouraging finding given that the projects are still on-going. Examples of use to date include:

- **Basic Skills** – two projects showed particular promise on a practical level, one producing on-line Basic Skills learning materials (likely to be adopted by Ufi depending on the project’s evaluation findings) and a second examining digital television as a potential delivery mechanism for basic skills learning. There was some disappointment on the lack of information on how to attract potential learners – a key issue with this particular target group – and which approaches work best with them, although a good practice in marketing guide has recently been produced which will help address the first issue.
- **Trade Unions** – one interviewee described working with the Trade Union cluster group and associated projects, which provided useful information at both policy and practical levels. By linking to Trade Union learning reps and their work with firms, useful employer links had been made and information on demand received.
- **Spin-off benefits** – interviewees identified a number of spin-off benefits from Round 3 projects, including forming a base for local and regional hub strategies. They also led to new relationships with important representative agencies, for example an NTO-led project which developed on-line training materials to support the introduction of a new system for making on-line returns to central government.
- **Learner Support** – projects were felt to have influenced both practice and policy in the field of learner support, due in the view of the interviewee to the “cluster group feeling they were listened to” and so engaging with the learning process. As well as findings from the group and field worker, a core of four or five projects had robustly ‘tested’ on-line support for mentoring, tutoring and on-line learning styles, which have influenced both policy and practice.

While many of the benefits related to the collection and assessment of new ideas, one interviewee described how the projects had **confirmed the approach they were following**, (namely reaching SMEs through intermediaries and by promoting products to meet business needs) rather than shaping it, although some examples of good practice were identified at the practical level.

4.3.3 Key Issues

The interviews identified a series of issues surrounding dissemination and mainstreaming of Round 3 project findings, including:

- **Mis-match between projects and Ufi needs** – the timing of Round 3 was felt to have been less than optimum for Ufi purposes, although this is more about opportunism than a lack of foresight at the programme level. Interviewees reflected the views of many projects that insufficient information was available at the start of the projects to ensure compatibility with Ufi’s requirements, and that some “reverse engineering” had taken place to make the projects fit these needs after the event. As one interviewee described, it may have been better if Round 3 had been able to start 12 months later.
- **Programme planning issues** – irrespective of the mis-match between projects and specific Ufi needs discussed above, weaknesses were identified in the planning of Round 3. Too many projects were felt to have developed in isolation, with no national overview of their distribution by theme – which led to many being locally focused and responding to local agendas. This in turn led to many different delivery models being developed, not all of which are analogous with Ufi and some of which are of little value and unsustainable. The view emerged that there had been insufficient targeting and project specification at the outset, although this is inextricably linked to the difficulties regarding timing and ADAPT/Ufi match.
- **Policy vs practice** – the balance between policy and practice foci of Round 3 projects was questioned, with most of the interviewees feeling there was too much emphasis on policy and research and less on practice. While this may be more of an issue for Round 3, where a new policy framework was in place requiring guidance on delivery, there were suggestions that information on some key practical areas was still awaited. Areas where more information and good practice would be welcomed included attracting new/hard to reach learners, engaging and working with SMEs, and delivering to firms and individuals with low specification ICT hardware – although recent guidance on marketing may help address this.
- **Representation** – some of the interviewees questioned the extent to which all Round 3 projects are involved in the dissemination process, and how many are delivering useful materials/lessons but going unrecognised. Although impossible to quantify, interviewees less satisfied with the information received to date wondered if this was a case of information not being communicated rather than the projects not meeting their specific needs. The post-event follow-up interviews with projects also hinted at this issue, where concerns were raised that a small group of projects seemed to continue to appear and present at events. However there is a further dimension to this issue, as illustrated by one of the generic interviewees, who was concerned that lessons from Round 3 were not percolating **outside** of Ufi, and that important learning opportunities could be missed. Clearly individual projects also have responsibilities to identify potentially interested parties and take steps to discuss their findings with them.

4.3.4 Improvements

With hindsight, interviewees suggested a series of improvements to the dissemination and mainstreaming processes, and good practice tips for dissemination activities more widely. These included:

- **Ensure direction in programme planning** – so that projects meet the needs they were intended to address. This would include producing guidance with a clear brief and a list of topics, and careful monitoring of implementation to ensure they stayed on track.
- **Management approach** – one interviewee described how projects “should be managed rather than funded”, within a national framework, to ensure their impact is maximised their activities co-ordinated. The importance of ensuring that projects meet the specific practice and policy demands of their mainstream targets was stressed more widely.
- **Increase the involvement of employer organisations** – in one case an NTO-based project had been particularly effective in meeting specific sectoral needs, as well as providing a number of useful employer contacts for Ufi. Given their remit, NTOs were seen as a prime target for partnership activity. More widely, it was felt that NTOs and other employer representatives can make important contributions to programme development, where their sector knowledge can best be exploited.
- **Increase involvement of other agencies** – in addition to employer organisations, interviewees felt that closer links could be established with a number of other agencies. For example, Regional Development Agencies should be involved as holders of workforce development budgets, as should the newly emerging Learning and Skills Councils.
- **Ensure technical inputs into programme planning and bid appraisal** – the experience of Round 3 had illustrated the importance of having the facility for technical inputs into both programme specification and application appraisal. Although perhaps particularly acute with regard to Ufi, this facility will be important at the programme specification stage in ensuring that precise information needs are met.
- **Make events more participative and project driven** – some interviewees found that projects tended to listen rather than actively contribute to events, and although the introduction of professional facilitators was felt to have improved this ensuring participation was seen as an important issue.

5 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This section sets out the main conclusions and recommendations resulting from the second round of fieldwork undertaken in 2000. As has been described previously the fieldwork focused on the issues of dissemination and mainstreaming, and as undertaken on a considerably smaller scale than in 1999 the findings should be viewed as indicative.

While the findings tended to support both the conclusions and recommendations of the first report, it is important to note that they are also subject to the same constraints, namely:

- Timing issues – following programme extensions into the 2001 year, it is not possible to provide firm final conclusions while many projects are still on-going
- Assessing mainstream impacts – as previously, this can be hampered by variations in awareness levels, definitions, timing and projects' tendencies to exaggerate.

5.2 CONCLUSIONS

Overall the conclusions of the recent fieldwork **support those of the final report**, and confirm many of the issues identified previously, for example around the delivery and monitoring processes and transnational partnership formation and collaborative working.

The inclusion of ADAPT Round 3 and EMPLOYMENT Joint Dissemination projects have provided insights into elements of the programme management approach proposed in the earlier report (and summarised in Section 2). These have been reinforced by the follow-up work with former case studies, which showed that they faced many of the barriers described previously, particularly with reference to mainstream processes and impacts. However some additional pointers have been identified around the key issue areas described in the earlier report, and these are illustrated in the summary conclusions provided below.

5.2.1 ADAPT Round 3

The ADAPT Round 3 projects interviewed were still ongoing, with project managers feeling they would achieve their performance targets in all but two of the eight cases. A common issue in achieving their targets related to the difficulties in engaging with SMEs, a common theme from the earlier fieldwork and one which was noted across the other ADAPT rounds. Although no specific examples of transferable good practice in engaging with SMEs were identified amongst the projects interviewed, a series of broad principles emerged, including:

- Ensuring there is a need/demand for a proposed product or service.
- Involving SMEs in the development of project ideas – to ensure relevance, but also as a potential source of initial beneficiaries.

- Using larger firms to attract their SME suppliers.
- Making SME involvement in projects as straightforward as possible - for example by streamlining monitoring arrangements.
- Ensuring that SMEs have a clear view of the potential value of their involvement in the project – i.e. what's in it for them.

As the minimum requirements for transnational collaboration were relaxed for Round 3, the transnational aspirations of the projects interviewed were mainly limited to the exchange of information, although three described closer collaborative working – either through joint dissemination strategies or in one case joint project development work from the outset.

Although still on-going, many of the projects had already taken part in advanced dissemination activities, mainly as part of the Ufi/ADAPT infrastructure but also locally and between their project partners. Issues were raised about the effectiveness of dissemination events arranged centrally (concerning issues of inclusion and the level of detail at which they were pitched), but overall felt the dissemination activities had been helpful. The findings from the information recipient interviews provided further insights, and also evidenced how projects are not necessarily best placed to identify their own mainstream impacts.

In terms of mainstream utilisation, projects were found to have considerable mainstreaming potential, with six of the eight interviewed rating medium or above (ie. potential for application in their target sector and beyond). The extent to which this potential had been achieved to date, **in the view of the projects**, was limited, with five providing evidence of their impact on practice (mainly locally and regionally) and three on policy at the regional and national levels. However, as the information recipient interviews identified, there is evidence that the Round 3 projects are having a considerable influence on the development of the Ufi initiative.

5.2.2 EMPLOYMENT Joint Dissemination Projects

As with the ADAPT Round 3 projects, the EMPLOYMENT Joint Dissemination projects described achieving their aims in the main, and identified a series of delivery issues common to the previous projects. Although based on a sample of only three projects, a series of key success factors based on their experience of delivering joint dissemination projects could be identified, including:

- Ensuring complementarity and a common philosophy between partners
- Ensuring strong leadership and commitment amongst project workers
- Ensuring the equal distribution of tasks amongst partners
- Holding headline events (such as national conferences)
- Ringfencing dissemination budgets
- Being prepared to share both success and failure.

In terms of their mainstream impacts, the projects influence was found to be predominantly local and practice-focused, and while some useful benefits were described little evidence of vertical mainstreaming was identified. The enhanced dissemination activities did, however, uncover new barriers to local mainstreaming,

with one project identifying financial and institutional structures which acted as impediments to local mainstreaming. Projects were also disappointed in their mainstream successes, partly as their outputs were felt to be of wider value but also at the lack of support in identifying policy contacts.

Given the purpose of the Joint Dissemination projects, it is disappointing that no evidence of vertical mainstreaming was identified, and that more was not done to ensure policy contacts were included in projects' dissemination strategies. This said, the finding is based on the experiences of only three projects – although the fact that Joint Dissemination projects were not mentioned in our interviews with policy contacts supports this position.

5.2.3 Case Study Follow-up Interviews

The four case study follow-up interviews allowed progress to be assessed in terms of dissemination and mainstreaming since the first interviews, approximately 12 months ago. Overall, the projects illustrated a similar range of issues to those identified in the first contacts, and described similar patterns of impact with:

- The majority of impacts being practically focused and locally based – in terms of influencing the activities of their partners and associated agencies
- Policy impacts were limited, although some regional policy influence was expected and the ADAPT Round 3 project was confident of influencing the development of Ufi and impacts on their target sector before completion in June 2001.

The difficulties in identifying suitable policy contacts were also illustrated, although the extent to which they had attempted to identify potential contacts varied considerably. Indeed, one project saw their role as the provision of locally focused lessons, and had dedicated minimum effort to wider pro-active dissemination activities. Another suggested that the support providers in future initiatives could play a role in identifying suitable contacts in advance, as well as potential sources of funding to allow this contacts to continue outside of the project timescale.

In the projects' opinions, and those of the consultants, considerable potential existed for their findings to be used to inform developments in a range of sectors, providing an important message which doubtless applies to many ADAPT and EMPLOYMENT projects. The fact that they had been less successful at influencing at the national policy level does not mean that valuable lessons have not been learnt, and the challenge remains for the remaining stages of the programme to ensure these lessons are collected, analysed, and presented to policy makers in a digestible form. This process could be linked to the development of EQUAL, with early policy maker engagement beginning with a review of available information as part of the development of a requirement list for projects under the new Community Initiative.

5.2.4 Information Recipients

The interviews with information recipients again proved to be a useful source of information on dissemination and mainstreaming, in particular the ADAPT Round

3/Ufi contacts. Two ‘groups’ of individuals were contacted – a ‘generic’ group and individuals with a specific interest in Ufi.

Generic Respondents

As some of the generic interview subjects had been contacted previously, it was possible to observe any changes they had noticed in dissemination activities over the previous 12 months. While some change in the nature of materials received (concentrating more on emerging/final findings) and events staged was noted, overall limited information had been received and a number of interviewees expressed disappointment at not receiving more. This was particularly disappointing in two cases, where individuals from Departments outside DfEE had attempted to engage with the ADAPT programme but to no avail.

In these cases, there was little evidence of projects impacting on either practice or policy, and it was clear that many of the issues identified in the earlier work continued to apply. Additional issues identified included limited awareness of how to access project information, concerns over ADAPT Round 3 project information being confined to Ufi (when it could have wider currency), and the lack of comparative information to assess good practice.

ADAPT Round 3 Respondents

The dissemination approach developed for ADAPT Round 3/Ufi in many respects mirrored the suggestions for programme management in the previous report, and in many respects supported the rationale for enhanced policy maker involvement. While projects’ views of their influence nationally were limited, the interviews with information recipients showed that Round 3 projects had already had **a significant influence on practice and policy** within Ufi.

This had been achieved through a range of project events, thematic groupings and report production, with interviewees finding direct project contact the best way of collecting information. Other approaches were identified, including the use of field workers to extract information from projects, and currently a number of good practice materials are being produced to directly address projects’ needs.

Questions were raised, however, over the inclusivity of the current dissemination approach, with concerns being raised that some findings may be lost from projects which have not taken part in the main dissemination events.

While the policy focus of Round 3 and the development of an infrastructure to collect and process the key findings reflected the programme management approach proposed for EQUAL, the Round also highlighted the need for policy inputs in the programme development stage. One of the negative findings around Round 3 projects was that too many of them were not consistent with the aims of Ufi and so were unlikely to produce relevant findings. While this is more a function of the opportunistic nature of Round 3, it illustrated the importance of having clear policy targets (and in this case technical ICT specifications) prior to applications being invited.

Across both sets of respondents a number of **suggestions for improving** the dissemination and mainstreaming processes were made, many of which reflected the findings of the previous fieldwork. These included:

- Ensuring direction and focus in programme planning
- Engaging with a wider policy community – for example inviting more national bodies and employer organisations such as NTOs to contribute to programme development – and ensuring the right **people** within organisations are engaged
- Ensuring that project promoters have the necessary skills to disseminate their work
- Enforcing a more proactive stance on dissemination and mainstreaming at the programme management level
- Making dissemination events more participative and project driven.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

As with the conclusions, the second round of fieldwork served more to support the initial recommendations than to identify new ones. However, the additional work has provided some additional pointers, and enhanced/refined some of the finer detail points, notably around the earlier proposals for programme management.

These recommendations are set out below, by Programme Management and Current /Recent Projects:

5.3.1 Programme Management

There was agreement with the proposed approach to be implemented under EQUAL from both projects and policy makers alike – although the points on resourcing were re-iterated by policy makers. It may be that the Development Partnership structure may alleviate these resource constraints to some extent, as there may be fewer and more focused ‘points of contact’ for access to project information. The involvement of policy makers in **all** stages of the programme cycle was welcomed, and in addition to the previous recommendations it will be important to ensure that:

- The most relevant individuals are engaged in the process, rather than looking for solely organisational involvement
- Technical aspects are included in the project development and appraisal processes – particularly with reference to ICT and high technology projects
- Different approaches are examined for collecting and exchanging project information – such as the use of field workers as under ADAPT Round 3, or via web based options
- Information is provided on how to access national policy people (and vice versa) – which could be made easier with fewer contact points under EQUAL
- Assistance is also provided on identifying local and regional policy contacts, which can also be a barrier to dissemination. This will be difficult for any national support provider to address – although the Development Partnership approach may assist.

- Specific training/guidance is available on dissemination and mainstreaming – as not all project managers are good disseminators

One more radical recommendation would be to involve policy makers in the development of bids for individual activities. While this would have considerable resource implications, it may be worthy of consideration at the Development Partnership level, where the numbers of contacts would be manageable when segmented by theme.

5.3.2 Current/Recent Projects

Although the current ADAPT and EMPLOYMENT Initiatives are coming to a close, it is not too late to take steps to ensure the products, learning points and promising approaches resulting from their work are not lost and reach the widest possible audience. We recommend that:

- The promotion of ADAPT and EMPLOYMENT is continued (or even heightened) as the projects approach completion
- Steps are taken to ensure emerging lessons are not lost – through the analysis and compilation of project evaluation reports and project visits (although we understand this process is planned to take place)
- Project findings submitted to Ufi findings are more widely disseminated – importantly to other ICT-focused initiatives.
- Some form of review/comparator information is developed to help projects identify best practice – this could include expert witness approaches, or the review of materials by an external expert.

5.4 MESSAGES FOR EQUAL

Finally, the previous report set out a series of messages for the development of EQUAL based on the experiences of ADAPT and EMPLOYMENT programmes in GB. A number of the recommendations from the previous report feature in the draft GB programming document, and it is worthwhile summarising the messages for innovation and transnationality in EQUAL set out in the previous report.

5.4.1 Innovation and Project Development

Prior research - research at the pre-bidding stage was found to be key to developing innovative project and ensuring their transferability and degree of local or national policy relevance.

Links with target groups/or representative agencies - developing an understanding of the needs of, and issues facing, projects' intended beneficiaries is key to targeting, and may be achieved through 'market assessments' for the product or service, by forming links with beneficiary groups/the agencies which represent them, and engagement with potential policy customers.

Transnational partner inputs - transnational partners can be the source of valuable inputs to the project development process, and to set the proposed project innovation in a wider context.

At the **programme** level, three factors emerged as key to the development and delivery of innovative projects and which will be important in developing EQUAL:

- Clarity of programme objectives
- Clear and consistent guidance on the level of innovation
- Flexibility in programme management

5.4.2 Transnationality and Partnership Development

Selecting transnational partners - given the importance of ensuring complementarity between projects, considerable time should be allowed to the matching and engagement process. Key principles in partner matching include:

- Ensuring complementarity
- Developing common understandings
- Taking time to assess individual partners
- Considering working with previous partners

Techniques for effective collaborative working - transnational collaboration needs careful management for the objectives developed to be achieved. Given the negative impact of unequal contributions to transnational partnerships, it is important to ensure a clear plan is established for collaborative activities.

ANNEX I

**SUMMARY CHARACTERISTICS OF PROJECTS
INTERVIEWED**

ADAPT ROUND 3 PROJECTS

Project No	Partnership	Summary Description
1	Lead partner: HE College Other GB partners: 33 regional partners Transnational partners: several Dutch partners	The project sought to improve the economic effectiveness of businesses by establishing a series of learning centres in the region, linked to a central hub to test how this infrastructure works and its effectiveness in delivering new learning opportunities. The project encompasses seven local projects, each with responsibility for identifying their own target groups and providing rationales for their selection. The key delivery partners meet monthly and discuss thematic issues across all the projects, and contacts have been formed with a range of local agencies and interests.
2	Lead: TEC Other GB partners: 8, including FE colleges, an NTO, private sector and national bodies	The project aimed to assist SMEs to better understand the benefits of learning to adapt to global and national economic challenges. It builds on previous project findings that barriers to lifelong learning exist in most firms. By investigating ways of improving the motivation of new learners and identifying and addressing barriers to learning of SMEs and individuals, the project aimed to address the low levels of skills in the region, as highlighted in previous research. The project links training providers and SMEs telematically and also includes the use of innovative mobile learning centres.
3	Lead: HE College Other GB partners: series of regional networks Transnational: 2	This project aimed to identify and document the changes required for SMEs to benefit from ICT-supported learning. Five regional networks were established to test and drive the processes of change and development necessary to turn UFI from concept to reality. The networks identified good practice emerging from the pilots and other projects within their region, fed the information to an SME Observatory. The Observatory used innovative web-based tools to capture lessons emerging from the regional networks and other ADAPT or labour market development projects. Any lessons are researched by the Observatory and explored through a series of on-line discussions and face-to-face workshops. The Observatory is also conducting research into key issues for partners seeking to contribute to the development of new learning systems.
4	Lead: Local Authority Other GB partners: 7 Transnational: 4 – Ireland, Netherlands, Greece and Spain	This project developed ideas from an earlier project and used a mobile Internet training facility to take ICT based learning into non-traditional environments, targeting small arts based businesses including visual and performing arts, media / design, fashion and textiles and craft. The project is essentially concerned with taking training opportunities into more attractive and accessible locations for SMEs. Throughout its life, the project has occupied five centres including the Barbican (from inception for six months), a theatre café, a fashion centre and currently a football ground. Beneficiaries can access two one-day courses ('Business use of the Internet' and 'website design'), after which they are entitled to one-to-one trainer support.
5	Lead: TEC	This project sought to develop an infrastructure for making learning more accessible and relevant to both

	Other GB partners: 14 Transnational: 5	individuals and companies. It sought to identify the skill needs of managers and employees of SMEs; motivate the workforce to a culture of lifelong learning; provide learning routes based on sound guidance and explore the role of ICT and new technology. The project will establish an infrastructure and delivery mechanism across a sub-region, with the aim of improving the SME skills base and raise the profile of learning with new forms of technology. The project is an umbrella project, encompassing several sub-projects including a website and database of local training opportunities; a freephone hotline (call centre); a network of 32 Learning Centres (other points of access); and 12-14 centres offering business support.
6	Lead: Local Authority Other GB partners: 9	This project aimed to maximise access and inclusivity of Learn Direct for workplace learners. Focussing on learner support needs within SMEs, the project examined the use of Information Learning Technology with SMEs in the land-based sectors. Training sessions on the Internet were offered to owner-managers to ensure their businesses are able to access on-line learning opportunities as they become available. Learner supporters/mentors within SMEs can then be trained in supporting learners using ILT. The UK partnership comprised nine partners, while transnational activities are concerned with sharing good practice, methodologies and appropriate learner support models for SMEs.
7	Lead: HE College Other GB partners: 5 FE Colleges and a TEC in the same region	This project built on an existing credit framework and network developed in 1996 to promote the development of a unified credit framework across the FE/HE curriculum. It provided small incremental units of learning offering practical steps from basic skills through to HE within a regional context. Targeted at SMEs in the region, the aim was to link participating companies telematically to the training and learning providers within the network. The providers respond to the training and learning needs of companies by generating accredited units, providing new ones where none exist. It is hoped that by targeting companies and 'agents of change' within them, the barriers of access to learning and the often inappropriate and unattractive facilities that are currently available, may be overcome. The project therefore seeks to test two hypotheses: a well developed credit framework will stimulate access to learning at work; and information and communication technology can be utilised in the workplace to increase the take up of learning and training opportunities.
8	Lead: Private Sector Other GB partners: 4 Transnational: 2 – Ireland and Denmark	This project aims to enable the UK plumbing sector to learn new skills in the design and installation of solar water heating systems. Building on a previous course developed by the lead partner and the Association of Plumbing And Heating Contractors, the project sought to develop new materials (video, CD-ROMS and business skill course), delivery methods and programmes to ensure effective training of UK plumbers in solar water heating design and installation skills.

EMPLOYMENT Joint Dissemination Projects

Project No	Strand	Partnership	Coverage	Summary Description
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1	INTEGRA	Lead: College Others: 4 GB partners in 2 regions	National	This project sought to empower beneficiaries through participation in the evaluation process, beyond simply recording their opinions, by undergoing training to deliver the evaluation themselves. All three projects were visited by the beneficiaries to allow services to be compared.
2	NOW	Lead: College Others: 2 GB partners in 2 regions, 1 transnational in Denmark	National	The project aimed to identify best practice in Family Learning and its effect in raising the personal and vocational aspirations of all family members. The experiences and learning points of three Round 2 projects were exchanged between the their partners and regional agencies, disseminated through a combination of conferences, roadshows and new networks for Family Learning.
3	YOUTHSTART	Lead: Voluntary Sector Others: 9 GB partners in 3 regions	National	The project featured a partnership of four Round 2 Youthstart projects, and identified good practice and key success factors in FE, Pre-vocational and Work Based training in youth programmes with the intention of informing the development of Connexions. The project reviewed the partners' projects delivered through mainstream youth service providers, and evaluated FE and Work Based training (including retention rates and long term benefits). The project featured a transnational conference to present findings to mainstream providers and policy makers in Birmingham.

Case Study Follow-up Projects

Project No	Strand/Round	Partnership	Summary Description
1	ADAPT Rd 2	Lead: University Other GB partners: 16 Transnational: 6	This project aimed to provide a flexible and comprehensive portfolio of training and information products to employees and managers of SMEs in a predominantly rural region, particularly those threatened with redundancy. It aimed to develop, pilot & deliver over 70 new and innovative training products to over 2000 beneficiaries. A wide range of 'action research' was undertaken and products disseminated at the regional, national and international levels. The project built upon and extended existing provision, and aimed to bring together in one partnership all of the major providers and developers in the region.
2	HORIZON Rd 2	Lead: University Other GB partners: 7 Transnational: 3	This project focused on the tourism, leisure, heritage and recreation sectors, and sought to improve systems for the employment (including recruitment and career development) of disabled people at professional and managerial levels. This included the development of training materials to support flexible careers in these expanding sectors, and transnational collaboration to support the development of peer-counselling/mentoring.
3	YOUTH Rd 2	Lead: FE College Other GB partners: 2 Transnational: 3	The project targeted the most disaffected young people at school leaving age and/or who may be on the school register (but not attending) in a Scottish city – offering them an alternative to school based on a six month project which combined personal development, fun group activities, 'creative and dynamic' projects vocational training – linked to business and work experience. Parents/guardians were encouraged to participate as much as possible. A reflection of how disaffected/disturbed the client group are was illustrated by the project manager's comment that of one group of 16 beneficiaries, 7 had witnessed murders, some within their own families. The young people were described as the '3 rd generation unemployed' (ie. many of their parents/grandparents had not worked).
4	ADAPT Rd 3	Lead: HE College Other GB partners: 5 Transnational: 4	The project set out to develop and test new knowledge and learning systems and communications in supply chains within the automotive sector. It aimed to develop benchmarking tools, learning materials, best practice scenarios and methodologies within a UFI context to assist SMEs to adapt to new requirements resulting from fundamental changes taking place within supply chains in the sector. Specific objectives included establishing a national partner network complemented by a transnational partner network and an employer network within four regions and up to six knowledge networks of large companies and their SME suppliers; establishing a supply chain skills observatory; developing multi-media benchmarking tools for SME managers and three sets of 'on-line learning' materials; and developing an ICT based knowledge/learning network linking a training support model with individual learners and workplace access points/learning centres.

ANNEX II

INTERVIEW CHECKLISTS

FINAL EVALUATION OF THE ADAPT AND EMPLOYMENT COMMUNITY INITIATIVES

ADAPT ROUND 3 PROJECT INTERVIEW CHECKLIST

Introduction

Review project documentation (bid document, project visit reports, other available materials) and check main details with project manager. Prepare boxed paragraph in final write-up. What is the status of the project – on-going (completion date?) or completed.

Delivery/Project Performance

- 1 How has the project performed against the original targets set out in the bid document?
- 2 In the project manager's view, what have been the main achievements of the project?
- 3 What have been the key issues in terms of delivery to date? (and reasons for under/over performance vs targets?). Probe for:
 - Partnership issues (national/EU, barriers incl. lack of complementarity, etc)
 - Client take up-issues (demand and engagement, did project meet need, etc)
 - Funding issues and impact on delivery
- 4 Can any key success factors be identified in delivering innovative projects in the relevant area (i.e. working with young people, etc)?

ADAPT 3 Specific - Transnationality

- What transnational activities has the project has been involved in, including transnational involvement in:
 - Preparing bid documents and project concepts
 - Implementation
 - Networking
 - ANO
- Who were their transnational partners? – sectors etc rather than names
- Any transnational benefits to date – either to the GB project or from the GB project out?
- The extent to which findings have or will be shared transnationally.

Evaluation

- 5 How did/does the project measure progress against its objectives and its quantitative outputs/outcomes?
- 6 How does the project identify its key learning points, for its own use and for wider dissemination?
- 7 What in the project's view are the key/main emerging findings to date?

Dissemination

- 8 What dissemination activities has the project been involved in to date?
- summarise main activities – own and national conferences, workshops, materials produced and distributed, articles, websites, etc.
 - does the project have a joint dissemination strategy with its partners, or disseminate separately?
 - describe the main audience for this dissemination
 - members of the project partnership
 - beyond the partnership locally or regionally
 - beyond the partnership nationally and beyond
 - identify any policy links at the regional or national levels – if the project has been in contact with relevant policy makers, collect names and departments for follow-up
- If no dissemination activities undertaken to date:
- are activities planned, and if so what and when will they take place?
 - if no activities planned, how will they pass on the lessons of the project?
- 9 Do less formal links exist with policy/lessons customers – eg. formed through project visits, etc? If so describe, and record contact for follow-up.
- 10 Is the project involved in any thematic groups? Y/N
If Yes, which groups, what have the project inputs been, what have these inputs led to, and how has the project itself benefited from involvement?

ADAPT Round 3 Specific:

- Dissemination/Networking events attended - which events were ADAPT-focused and which Ufi focused, did the project present or attend, etc
- What are the projects' views on the effectiveness of the dissemination events attended? How could they be improved?
- To what extent does the project feel that the ADAPT 3/Ufi infrastructure has helped them to:
 - deliver innovative, high quality projects?
 - build on good practice by the effective networking of emerging findings?
 - communicate the findings of their projects to inform developments elsewhere?

Utilisation and Impact

- 11 To the project's knowledge, have their findings been used to:
- influence **practice**:
 - at local, regional, national or EU levels
 - if so describe, including impacts on activities
 - influence **policy**:
 - at the regional, national or EU levels
 - if so describe, including impact on policy development
- (Collect as much evidence as possible, esp. policy contacts for follow-up)
- 12 In the view of the project, have any opportunities to learn from their experiences been missed/not been fully exploited?
- 13 What has the **project/partnership itself** learnt from other projects dissemination activities? Did this help the implementation of their own project?

Mainstreaming Support

- 14 Has any assistance/support with mainstreaming been received to date? Y/N
- If Yes, describe help received, who from, and quality/relevance.
 - If No, what support systems are project aware of/expected?
- 15 What mainstreaming support would be useful? How could support for mainstreaming be improved?
- 16 Is there more projects themselves can do to assist the mainstreaming process?

Finally, In Our View

- 17 What is the **potential** for mainstreaming this project/elements:
High (applicable to activities target and other sectors) _____
Medium (potential to be applied in target sector) _____
Low (limited to extension of current project) _____
- 18 Has **dissemination** taken place:
Between national and transnational partners _____
Outside partnership locally (within region) _____
Outside partnership nationally (operations or policy level) _____
Outside partnership at European level (between transnational partners) _____

19 Are their identifiable mainstream **impacts on practice**:

Locally _____
Regionally _____
Nationally _____
At EU level _____

20 Are their identifiable mainstream **impacts on policy**:

Locally _____
Regionally _____
Nationally _____
At EU level _____

For policy impacts - ensure collect relevant contact details for follow-up, to identify 'receivers/users' and assess use made. Make an assessment of potential 'usefulness', both current and future potential, against the following:

Direct policy relevance/link _____
Policy relevant/informed policy _____
Not immediately relevant/may be used in future _____
Not relevant/unlikely to be used _____

21 What have been the **main impacts** of the project to date:

- Locally
- Regional
- Nationally
- EU level

22 How **effective** has the project been in its approach to dissemination and mainstreaming? How could dissemination/mainstreaming be improved?

FINAL EVALUATION OF THE ADAPT AND EMPLOYMENT COMMUNITY INITIATIVES

EMPLOYMENT JOINT PROJECTS INTERVIEW CHECKLIST

Introduction

Review project documentation (bid document, project visit reports, other available materials) and check main details with project manager. Prepare boxed paragraph in final write-up. What is the status of the project – on-going (completion date?) or completed.

EMPLOYMENT Joint Projects specific:
--

- | |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• how did the dissemination partnership come about? |
|---|

- what were its specific aims (ie. to share findings between projects with common foci, expand dissemination capability/reach wider audience, share good evaluation/dissemination practice, etc)?
- in the project manager's view, is the combined approach may be more effective than individual approaches? What evidence is there for this/what do we think?
- Had the constituent projects delivered the dissemination strategies set out in their bids (ie. was there substitution or truly additional work)?

Delivery/Project Performance

- 5 How has the project performed against the original targets set out in the bid document?
- 6 In the project manager's view, what have been the main achievements of the project?
- 7 What have been the key issues in terms of delivery to date? (and reasons for under/over performance vs targets?). Probe for:
 - Partnership issues (national/EU, barriers incl. lack of complementarity, etc)
 - Client take up-issues (demand and engagement, did project meet need, etc)
 - Funding issues and impact on delivery
- 8 Can any key success factors be identified in delivering innovative projects in the relevant area (i.e. working with young people, etc)?

Evaluation

- 5 How did/does the project measure progress against its objectives and its quantitative outputs/outcomes?
- 6 How does the project identify its key learning points, for its own use and for wider dissemination?
- 7 What in the project's view are the key/main emerging findings to date?

Dissemination

- 8 What dissemination activities has the project been involved in to date?
 - summarise main activities – own and national conferences, workshops, materials produced and distributed, articles, websites, etc.
 - does the project have a joint dissemination strategy with its partners, or disseminate separately?
 - describe the main audience for this dissemination
 - members of the project partnership
 - beyond the partnership locally or regionally
 - beyond the partnership nationally and beyond

- identify any policy links at the regional or national levels – if the project has been in contact with relevant policy makers, collect names and departments for follow-up

If no dissemination activities undertaken to date:

- are activities planned, and if so what and when will they take place?
 - if no activities planned, how will they pass on the lessons of the project?
- 9 Do less formal links exist with policy/lessons customers – eg. formed through project visits, etc? If so describe, and record contact for follow-up.
- 10 Is the project involved in any thematic groups? Y/N
If Yes, which groups, what have the project inputs been, what have these inputs led to, and how has the project itself benefited from involvement?

Utilisation and Impact

- 11 To the project's knowledge, have their findings been used to:
- influence **practice**:
 - at local, regional, national or EU levels
 - if so describe, including impacts on activities
 - influence **policy**:
 - at the regional, national or EU levels
 - if so describe, including impact on policy development
- (Collect as much evidence as possible, esp. policy contacts for follow-up)
- 12 In the view of the project, have any opportunities to learn from their experiences been missed/not been fully exploited?
- 13 What has the **project/partnership itself** learnt from other projects dissemination activities? Did this help the implementation of their own project?

Mainstreaming Support

- 14 Has any assistance/support with mainstreaming been received to date? Y/N
- If Yes, describe help received, who from, and quality/relevance.
 - If No, what support systems are project aware of/expected?
- 15 What mainstreaming support would be useful? How could support for mainstreaming be improved?
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Finally, In Our View

- 17 What is the **potential** for mainstreaming this project/elements:
High (applicable to activities target and other sectors) _____
Medium (potential to be applied in target sector) _____

Low (limited to extension of current project) _____
- 18 Has **dissemination** taken place:
Between national and transnational partners _____
Outside partnership locally (within region) _____
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Regionally _____
Nationally _____
At EU level _____
- 20 Are their identifiable mainstream **impacts on policy**:
Locally _____
Regionally _____
Nationally _____
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- For policy impacts - ensure collect relevant contact details for follow-up, to identify 'receivers/users' and assess use made. Make an assessment of potential 'usefulness', both current and future potential, against the following:***
- Direct policy relevance/link _____
Policy relevant/informed policy _____
Not immediately relevant/may be used in future _____
Not relevant/unlikely to be used _____
- 22 What have been the **main impacts** of the project to date:
- Locally
 - Regional
 - Nationally
 - EU level
- 23 How **effective** has the project been in its approach to dissemination and mainstreaming? How could dissemination/mainstreaming be improved?

FINAL EVALUATION OF THE ADAPT AND EMPLOYMENT COMMUNITY INITIATIVES

CASE STUDY FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEW CHECKLIST

With the case study follow-ups, discussions will focus on individual project experiences, selected from projects whose partnership members and operational approaches embodied the key success factors described in the final report. Here interviews will focus on issues identified in initial visits, but as delivered by telephone must be kept brief (45 minutes or so) – so a focus on any additional dissemination, mainstreaming or final impacts.

Introduction

Review project documentation (bid document, project visit reports, other available materials) and check main details with project manager. Prepare boxed paragraph in final write-up. What is the status of the project – on-going (completion date?) or completed.

Delivery/Project Performance

- 9 How has the project performed against the original targets set out in the bid document?
- 10 In the project manager's view, what have been the main achievements of the project?
- 11 What have been the key issues in terms of delivery to date? (and reasons for under/over performance vs targets?). Probe for:
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- 12 Can any key success factors be identified in delivering innovative projects in the relevant area (i.e. working with young people, etc)?

Evaluation

- 5 How did/does the project measure progress against its objectives and its quantitative outputs/outcomes?
- 6 How does the project identify its key learning points, for its own use and for wider dissemination?
- 7 What in the project's view are the key/main emerging findings to date?

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 - identify any policy links at the regional or national levels – if the project has been in contact with relevant policy makers, collect names and departments for follow-up

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- are activities planned, and if so what and when will they take place?
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- Locally
- Regional
- Nationally
- EU level

22 How **effective** has the project been in its approach to dissemination and mainstreaming? How could dissemination/mainstreaming be improved?

ANNEX III

GOOD PRACTICE MATERIAL

THE FINAL EVALUATION OF THE ADAPT AND EMPLOYMENT COMMUNITY INITIATIVES IN GREAT BRITAIN

GOOD PRACTICE IN STIMULATING INNOVATION

The ADAPT and EMPLOYMENT Community Initiatives were established in 1995 to foster labour market policy development and practical activities through a range of innovative demonstration projects. These projects were undertaken on a partnership basis between organisations in different Member States, and supported on a match funding basis by the European Social Fund. Both Initiatives had different objectives:

- **ADAPT** sought to assist the adaptation of the workforce to industrial change; increase the competitiveness of industry (and SMEs in particular) and prevent unemployment through human resource development; and anticipate the development of new job types.
- **EMPLOYMENT** sought to support individuals within specific target groups who face difficulties in the labour market, and consisted of four strands:
 - HORIZON - targeting disabled people
 - INTEGRA - targeting vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, such as the very long term unemployed, people over 50 years of age, and refugees
 - NOW - promoting equality of opportunity between men and women
 - YOUTHSTART - targeting young people under 20 years of age.

Over 900 projects have been supported in GB, the majority of which will complete by the end of 2000 when the programme period ends. A final evaluation of both Initiatives has recently taken place which identified a series of key success factors and good practice approaches amongst GB projects, which are relevant to a range of ESF-funded projects.

Stimulating Innovation

Projects funded under ADAPT and EMPLOYMENT were intended to be innovative in order to provide lessons worthy of dissemination and of value to policy or practical development. More practically, projects sought to develop approaches which were completely new (such as developing new training provision in emerging industries and new technologies), or existing approaches which were applied in a new context or with a new target group (such as developing existing training and guidance approaches for use with ICT, or applying employment mentoring approaches to older workers).

At the project level a series of **key success factors for stimulating innovation** were identified, as described below.

1 Undertake prior research - research at the pre-bidding stage is key to the development of innovative project approaches. Project promoters who had researched the rationale for their projects, assessed their policy-relevance, and estimated demand for the products and services to be developed were more likely to implement relevant project ideas.

Similarly, prior research allows promoters to ensure their ideas are truly innovative, and do not duplicate ideas already tested. In some cases, the research process may contribute to the project more widely by identifying potential project partners, or organisations which may be suitable targets for the dissemination of project findings.

2 Exploit links with target groups and representative agencies – the involvement of potential target groups for projects, or their representative agencies, was an important part of the pre-bid research process.

Promoters should consider involving a variety of agencies in developing their project ideas, notably in specialist areas where they can provide specific insights. Potential beneficiaries and representative bodies could also play an important role during project implementation, helping ensure projects meet the needs they were intended to address.

3 Encourage partner inputs - partner inputs at the project concept/development stage can also be particularly useful, not least in testing ideas and setting plans for innovation in a wider context. Nationally this can help avoid duplication and confirm innovation, while transnational inputs can offer contextual insights and examples of existing practice across a wider area.

4 Learn from failure - any project which is truly innovative will carry the risk of failure. Where an innovative approach has been robustly trialed and found not to work (rather than failing due to poor management or other factors), it is equally important that these findings are communicated to ensure any relevant lessons are passed on.

Research and Project Development

Consultation with both potential beneficiaries and their representative bodies is an important part of the project development process. For example:

- The Round 2 NOW project was based around developing a national framework for Early Years training, and used partners from a previous project to formulate the project concept. Having previously worked with the National Children's Bureau and the local authority social services department, the promoter approached a university to access their expertise in women's equality issues. Following the preparation of a successful application, each of the organisations became full partners in the project.
- One ADAPT project sought to develop an accredited qualification and training programme in biotechnology, specifically environmental biotechnology and contaminated land. The project idea emerged from discussions between a large employer and a local university, and was refined through consultation with local SMEs (to test demand for the training and qualification) and national bodies (including the Environment Agency, EIC and the DTI Biotechnology Means Business initiative). Following the preparation of the bid, many of the employer contacts joined the project partnership.

In some cases continuing market research can be useful once implementation has commenced:

- The University based project ran a successful Round 1 ADAPT project to develop a qualification and training programme in the emerging field of mechatronics. The same project partnership developed a Round 2 bid which sought to extend the training coverage to the next generation of mechatronics equipment. However initial consultations with local SMEs found that few were aware of the new developments, so the project changed focus to concentrate on raising awareness of new technology developments.

THE FINAL EVALUATION OF THE ADAPT AND EMPLOYMENT COMMUNITY INITIATIVES IN GREAT BRITAIN

GOOD PRACTICE IN MAINSTREAMING

The ADAPT and EMPLOYMENT Community Initiatives were established in 1995 to foster labour market policy development and practical activities through a range of innovative demonstration projects. These projects were undertaken on a partnership basis between organisations in different Member States, and supported on a match funding basis by the European Social Fund. Both Initiatives had different objectives:

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What is Mainstreaming?

Projects funded under ADAPT and EMPLOYMENT were intended to be demonstration projects, where innovative approaches were trialed on a transnational partnership basis. The key concept to the overall success of the Initiatives is **mainstreaming** - the process by which lessons learnt from projects are collected and disseminated to inform policy and practical development (also known as the 'multiplier effect'). Mainstreaming can take place in two dimensions:

- **Horizontally** – aimed at the project promoter, partners and other local or regional agencies with similar interests, and commonly focusing on practical lessons.
- **Vertically** – aimed at influencing national policy, with the role of intermediaries being important in the transference of key lessons.

Importantly, mainstreaming is **not** the same as dissemination, although dissemination is an important component in the mainstreaming process. Mainstreaming relates to the actual utilisation of project findings and the adoption of innovative practice (and so key to the overall impact of the Initiatives), while dissemination is the process of distributing lessons through channels such as reports, events, thematic papers and project visits. Mainstreaming was found to have taken place at a number of levels (locally and nationally, between partners and across a sector, etc), although projects were most commonly found to have influenced practice at the local or regional level. The evaluation identified a number of **key success factors for mainstreaming**, as described below.

1 Establish a clear understanding of the mainstreaming process - projects are more able to extend their influence and potential for mainstream impacts through a clear understanding of the mainstreaming process and the structures in place to support it.

The mainstreaming process is shown in diagrammatic form, which describes how project findings and other outputs are documented and disseminated prior to their adoption at the national policy level. The diagram shows how projects can also inform policy development during implementation, with formative lessons being communicated as they are identified.

2 Develop mainstreaming plans - projects giving serious consideration to mainstreaming from the outset, usually in the form of a well developed mainstreaming plan, were more likely to achieve their aims than when approaches were developed later.

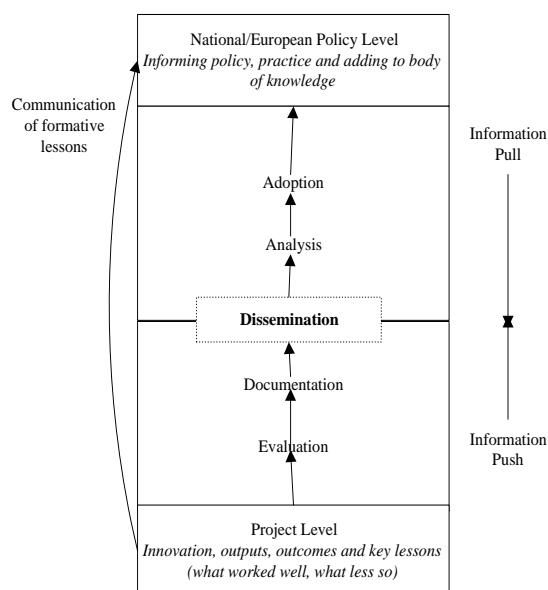
Ideally mainstreaming plans should be developed alongside the main project plan - so allowing, for example, early research on the policy relevance of the project to be used to identify potential dissemination targets. Importantly, projects should ensure that adequate time and resources are allocated to mainstreaming activities, as a number of projects described underestimating the resource implications of their mainstreaming plans.

In preparing mainstreaming plans, the selection of project partners, contacts with policy makers and the role of intermediaries will be important considerations.

3 Select project partners – while a range of criteria may be used to select both national and transnational project partners, the extent to which they can contribute to mainstreaming should be considered. The evaluation identified a number of cases where the role of individual project partners was central to the effectiveness of dissemination and resulting mainstream effects.

Commonly these partners included organisations with a national interest or role in

Diagram of the Mainstreaming Process



Dissemination

Projects followed a range of approaches to disseminating their project findings at the local, national and European levels. For example:

- One ADAPT project identified three separate audiences for their project – industry, academia and government, and tailored their activities accordingly. Their dissemination strategy featured presenting a paper at a DfEE conference, producing newsletters and establishing a website targeted at SMEs, and attending Support Unit dissemination events.
- A NOW project followed a combined approach to dissemination nationally and transnationally. Recognising that different approaches were suited to different audiences, they used a combination of events, academic papers and publications, television appearances, newsletters and the development of a website to disseminate their findings. They also used two women in senior management positions as 'champions' for the project, which was found to be particularly effective.
- In preparation for their dissemination activities, one HORIZON promoter established a mailing list of over 600 contacts to distribute information about the project. The list was split between organisations and policy makers, such as the RDAs and Government Offices, Employment Service, DfEE and the Department of Health.

the relevant topic area – although partners with previous experience

of ADAPT, EMPLOYMENT or similar demonstration projects were also able to draw on their experiences. When formulating their mainstreaming plans, projects should consider who could help ensure the widest possible audience for their project findings, and seek to engage with them.

4 Establish contacts with policy makers - the most direct means of influencing policy is through contact with policy makers and influencers, and although this level of contact was comparatively rare it often led to direct impacts on policy and practice at the national level.

While contacts with policy makers came about by a variety of means, often through the role of intermediaries, one to one contacts were described by both projects and contacts as the most effective.

The evaluation also identified that projects faced considerable challenges in identifying and establishing contact with policy makers of relevance to their projects, and that policy makers themselves have an active role to play in the mainstreaming process.

5 Recognise the importance of intermediaries - for the majority of projects, the role of intermediary organisations is central to their mainstreaming approach. In GB, the role of the ADAPT and EMPLOYMENT Support Units includes providing support to projects in implementing their dissemination and mainstreaming plans, as well as organising specific dissemination events and assisting mainstreaming on a more formative basis. The Support Units also play a crucial role in forging links between projects and policy makers.

However, the evaluation identified that not all projects were aware of the range and scope of assistance available to them, and so risked missing out on an important resource and source of support.

Partner Contributions to Mainstreaming

Project partners made a range of positive contributions to mainstreaming, either by providing useful contacts or through their roles and sector specialisms at the regional or national level. For example:

- **The NOW project built on earlier experiences to develop a national framework for Early Years training. The National Children’s Bureau were involved from the outset as a project partner, and made a valuable contribution to the dissemination and adoption of the project through their regional and national roles. This link also enabled the project findings to inform the development of Early Years policy within Government.**
- **Projects also brought a range of skills and experience to the mainstreaming process. One HORIZON project promoter, for example, found their experience of lobbying at the national and European levels helpful in the targeted disseminating of their findings, commenting that “we are a lobbying organisation – we’re used to disseminating and mainstreaming”.**

The Role of Intermediaries

The ADAPT and EMPLOYMENT Support Units provide a range of valuable assistance in supporting projects’ mainstreaming efforts, often based on insights provided during project monitoring visits. For example, the Units contribute to mainstreaming by:

- holding a range of dissemination events for projects, on a strand, sector or thematic basis
- brokering links between projects and policy makers, often through the production of good practice materials based on evidence collected from project visits
- establishing and maintaining communications between projects, policy makers and other

interested parties - for example through the ADAPT and EMPLOYMENT websites, newsletters and occasional publications.

As one policy maker described "...very few projects would have found their way to us without the Support Unit brokerage and facilitation role".

THE FINAL EVALUATION OF THE ADAPT AND EMPLOYMENT COMMUNITY INITIATIVES IN GREAT BRITAIN

GOOD PRACTICE IN TRANSNATIONAL COLLABORATION

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Over 900 projects have been supported in GB, the majority of which will complete by the end of 2000 when the programme period ends. A final evaluation of both Initiatives has recently taken place which identified a series of key success factors and good practice approaches amongst GB projects, which are relevant to a range of ESF-funded projects.

What is Transnational Collaboration?

ADAPT and EMPLOYMENT projects were developed and delivered on a partnership basis, featuring a range of local, national and transnational partners. These transnational partnerships were intended primarily as a means of stimulating the joint development of project ideas and their implementation, ensuring that the innovations realised are communicated at the EU level, and allowing experience and good practice to be exchanged between partners and projects. The evaluation identified a number of models of transnational partnership, ranging to partnerships focusing on the exchange of information and experience, to partnerships where partners worked jointly to develop and implement their projects.

Overall projects felt that the efforts expended on transnational collaboration were worthwhile, and identified a range of benefits ranging from the exchange of ideas to joint development and implementation approaches. However, a range of potential barriers to effective transnational collaboration were also identified - most importantly the lack of complementarity between partners and unequal partner contributions, but also cultural issues and issues surrounding the partnership development process.

Given the combination of potential benefits and potential barriers, the transnational collaboration process was an important element in the success of individual projects. The evaluation identified a number of **key success factors in transnational collaboration**, which are described below.

1 Identify suitable partners - as with national partners, the identification and selection of potential partners is key to effective transnational collaboration. Previous contacts may make good partners, as can organisations with prior experience of transnational collaboration, but only when clear benefits to the project will result from their involvement. When new transnational partners are sought, promoters can follow a range of approaches. These include:

- attempting to identify partners through existing networks
- accessing the European database, via the internet, for listings and descriptions of potential partners across the EC
- contacting the national Support Units, who provide help in brokering partnerships
- attending national or European partnership-brokering events.

Promoters must be prepared to invest considerable time and effort in identifying and selecting suitable transnational partners, as well as developing relationships with their new partners from the outset. Under EQUAL, resources will be dedicated to this process.

2 Ensure complementarity - the most important criteria for partner selection is the degree of complementarity between individual partners, and the importance of a compatible ethos and working culture between partners. This can be based on:

- similar project ideas or aims
- the potential partner's background or sector
- the skills and experience of the partner
- or a combination of these as best fits the requirements of the project.

Without some degree of complementarity between transnational partner activities the benefits to the individual projects are likely to be limited. However, the extent of complementarity will depend on the specific project, tasks and context for delivery. Where transnational objectives are to jointly develop project ideas a greater degree of complementarity will be required than for

Identifying and Selecting Partners

Promoters followed a number of approaches, based on the requirements of the proposed projects, previous experiences of transnational working and existing contacts. For example:

- A London university were the promoters for a Round 2 NOW project, and selected their transnational partners via the Europs database. Considerable time and effort was put into selecting suitable partners, with potential partners being visited once initial selections were made. While the initial budget allocation for partner selection was exceeded, the promoter felt there was no substitute for initial face-to-face meetings, which were invaluable in building the foundations of a successful partnership.
- An ADAPT project based their transnational partnership on existing contacts, including partners they had worked with on transnational projects in the past. This offered a number of advantages - including the opportunity to build on existing relations and move to implementation quickly, and the existence of shared understandings and sufficient familiarity to allow partners' strengths to be utilised. In addition (and as summarised below) existing familiarity meant tasks could be distributed across the partnership.

Ensuring Complementarity

Many projects made considerable efforts to ensure that complementarity existed between their planned activities and the experiences and plans of their potential partners. In some cases this relied on previous knowledge of individual partners, elsewhere wholly new partners were sought and potential complementarity assessed. For example:

- A Round 2 HORIZON project, promoting social enterprises for individuals with severe mental health difficulties, based their transnational partnership on existing relationships. This allowed them to identify specific partner inputs, including Greek partners with experience of business training for the mentally ill, Finnish partners with experience of employment initiatives in hospital/long term care environments and German partners who provided insights into

partnerships where the key aim is to share experience and good practice.

3 Establish complementary objectives - while complementarity between partners is the basis of transnational collaboration, the establishment of common aims and a 'shared vision' across the partnership is essential for effective collaborative working.

Here matching or developing complementary transnational objectives will be important - although these must be realistic and achievable. To help ensure the collaborative ambitions of the partnership are realised, it is important to ensure a sufficient budget is allocated to transnational activities, to include project visits, joint product development and transnational dissemination.

4 Techniques for collaborative working - once transnational partnerships are established and shared objectives and understandings reached, partnerships can begin to work together to deliver their shared projects. One of the main barriers to transnational working identified in the evaluation was the unequal contribution of individual partners. It is important that tasks are divided to meet the strengths of individual partners - as one project described "the need to develop individual roles is essential if the partnership is to move beyond parallel projects".

A number of approaches to task division, and ensuring that each partner contributed to the best of their ability, can be identified. These may include dividing work into discrete tasks types (such as administration, dissemination, etc) and allocating them to individual partners, or establishing working groups within the partnership responsible for specific activities.

In addition to establishing transnational working arrangements, the **establishment of suitable communications channels** was another important element in successful partnerships. While face-to-face meetings are essential at different stages in the project cycle, on-going contact can be maintained cheaply and effectively via email.

different legislative structures around social firms.

- A YOUTHSTART project learnt from previous experience and developed an approach to selecting partners and ensuring complementarity. First a checklist was emailed to prospective partners, completed, returned and graded to make up a shortlist. Each prospective partner was visited to assess their suitability and discuss their plans, before selecting the partners they wanted to work with. A transnational plan was then developed to meet the needs of each of the partners, which reflected the differences in partner approaches. The first full partnership meeting was used to establish a sound basis for the management of the project, with responsibilities being allocated to each member and working groups established to deal with IT and communications, products and monitoring and evaluation.

Techniques for Collaborative Working

A number of different approaches and techniques for ensuring the effectiveness of collaborative working were identified. For example:

- An ADAPT project divided their transnational partnership activities into discrete 'work passages', with responsibilities for training delivery, evaluation, case study development and administration being allocated to different members of the partnership. The approach had been followed by one of the partners in the past, and had the benefit of making the monitoring of outputs and expenditure more straightforward - as well as helping ensure that individual partners made their agreed contributions to the project.
- An INTEGRA project sought to pilot a long term mentoring approach to assist long-term unemployed individuals back into work. The promoter was keen to ensure each partner added value to the transnational collaboration, and sought to build in additional 'transnational' outputs from the outset. They also investigated common ideas of relevance to each partner, and established four thematic areas (motivation, work experience, mentoring and age-specificity) led by each transnational partner. This led to the production of reports on each of the themes, as well as engendering a sense of shared responsibility for the partnership's success.

